Chairman's Report April 2025 to March 2026
AGM 16th September 2026

Welcome to our Annual General Meeting for the year ending 31 March 2026. I have tried to pull together here the key points for the report year April 2025 to March 2026, and have added more to bring us up to date.

Our primary 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, centred around a large professional performance space.

We continue to work with a range of stakeholders, including Lambeth Council (officers, councillors and mayor), our local MP Steve Reed and his team, The GLA's Culture at Risk Team, Theatres Trust, Streatham Society, Streatham Action, Streatham Arts Community, and InStreatham business improvement district, to keep Streatham Hill Theatre, its condition and its potential in the forefront of their minds. We also keep a second tier of bodies up to date, including Historic England, who are responsible for listed buildings.

Looking at some of the key points from the FY (see our blog for more details):

- April 2025: our MP Steve Reed calls for support for theatre in Streatham.
- May: Ruach submits its planning application for change of use. Our campaign launches, with objections from ourselves, many local individuals and community groups, and bodies such as Theatres Trust.
- June: Sadiq Khan, London Mayor, is questioned about the planning application. He says it's down to Lambeth.
- July: We give a talk to Streatham Society for the Wandsworth History Fair. Ruach hold a special prayer service to cast out Satan and fight their enemies. Urban Explorers publish a video of the inside of the theatre (we cannot condone trespass but the video is worth watching).
- August: French post-graduate student publishes their vision for the theatre. Streatham Society magazine features the theatre and our vision.
- September: Norbury Knitters present us with a knitted banner.
- October: Streatham Theatre Company runs free tours of the theatre. These are "sold out" in hours.
- December: Brixton Chamber Orchestra stages a concert at the theatre. This is well attended and well received.
- February 2026: Lambeth planning responds to former Cllr Donna Harris's enquiry about delays to the Ruach application, saying the application is complex. They also note that there is a planning enforcement enquiry underway regarding works to the listed building. Streatham Society magazine

includes the theatre again. Lambeth's Night Time Strategy calls for a community focused night time offer for SHT.

- April: We write to all candidates for the Lambeth local election.
- May: We write to all elected councillors in the new Lambeth council; it is now hung with Greens being the largest party, replacing Labour who had held power for some years. LibDems hold a balance of power. Another Fire Brigade incident at the theatre. We attend Kite Day on the Common.
- June: We identify an opportunity for Ruach to terminate the lease on the Merkur slot machine operation and campaign for Ruach to exercise it. Although we haven't been told directly, we understand they did not.
- July: London Fire Brigade called again. SHT once again on the Theatres Trust At Risk Register. Commemorative plaque goes missing from front of theatre but Ruach don't respond to queries.
- September: Streatham Film Festival showing at SHT. Open House open days at SHT organised by Ruach. Ruach confirm plaque has been stolen.

The Ruach planning application remains with Lambeth officers for a recommendation. It has not yet been scheduled for the Planning Application Committee. That committee now has a different make up since the recent council elections.

Ruach have mentioned a potential change to a multi-use future for the theatre, telling Theatres Trust and some local groups that they are considering shared use as per the Dominion Theatre. Theatre impresario Thom Southerland remains interested in taking on the theatre, and with a consortium of major theatre companies has been privately promoting their plans with stakeholders.

Lambeth are also investigating potentially unapproved works to the building, now including the loss of the plaque. Ruach seem to have addressed the water ingress in the basement and dealt with a pigeon problem. Other works are underway. Concerns were raised about the lack of necessary health and safety inspections. Subsequently, there have been a few of incidents, including electrical fires causing a shutdown, and further unexplained police/fire incidents.

We regularly 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 Ruach to show the level of interest. Feedback suggests that Ruach rarely respond to these enquiries.

Our website, continues to be the gateway to everything about the theatre and the campaign, including documents, photographs, and, through our Memories project, audio or video interviews with people who performed at, or otherwise remember the

theatre. 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!

We have catalogued our archive of theatre programmes, donated by kind supporters and we welcome more donations. When resources permit, we would like to scan these and make them available online for you to read. We also get occasional requests from researchers looking for information about appearances by performers, which we can often help with information from our archives. We also benefit from an ongoing relationship with Lambeth Archives who hold a comprehensive collection of SHT material.

Looking at our supporters, we are grateful to have 12 'famous name' patrons. Plus, we have 257 creative industry supporters, joining the 1568 supporters on our mailing list, together with around 100 supporter organisations and 1524 X (Twitter), 1.6k Facebook, 1880 Instagram, 344 Threads and 237 BlueSky followers.

We use a CRM an online service from Beacon to keep our contact records, as used by many charities large and small. Beacon were impacted by a data security issue so we had to warn those in the database as part of our response to the incident. Beacon tell us that the data does not appear to have been shared.

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.

Of our volunteer charity Trustees, one third are required to stand down at this AGM but are eligible for re-election. We have also invited nominations for other Trustees to join the board. The election is later on the Agenda.

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.

Remember we have regular campaign meetings, held online, where you can get updates on the campaign, and contribute to planning. Please register for these at the website!

Plus, we regularly email out a newsletter to friends and the press, and post on social media – primarily Facebook, X, BlueSky, Threads and Instagram. Links to these are also on the website, or just search for Streatham Hill Theatre or FoSHT.

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

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David Harvey, Chairman

The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre
A volunteer-run community campaign
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Patrons: Akram Khan MBE, Baroness Floella Benjamin OM DBE DL, Catherine Russell, David Harewood OBE, Jessica Thom, Jools Holland OBE DL, Paul Merton, Renato Balsadonna, Robert Glenister, Samira Ahmed, Simon Callow CBE & Sir Mark Rylance