



PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE USE 10 MARCH 2020

Plans to save historic Streatham Hill Theatre for the community get a major boost with new backing announced by the Mayor of London

The Mayor of London today announced that the campaign to save the historic Streatham Hill Theatre will receive a pledge of £15,000 as part of Crowdfund London. This pledge will support plans to revive the dormant 2,800 capacity theatre as a multi-purpose arts and cultural venue, creating new opportunities and benefits for the local community.

The pledge will be put towards a crowdfunding campaign for a professional viability study to develop proposals and options for a sustainable business model for the historic theatre for generations to come.

The crowdfunding campaign was launched in January on the Spacehive platform by the Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre. The campaign has quickly become the most-backed crowdfunding campaign in the UK currently fund-raising on the platform, attracting over 300 pledges. It has gained huge groundswell of support from the local community, political leaders, and businesses, as well as support from the wider creative and heritage communities.

The pledge by the Mayor of London will be a huge boost to the campaign's chances of reaching its crowdfunding goal of £36,000. The Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre will now focus on a final campaigning push to secure further support from the community and organisations by the 25th May deadline.

David Harvey, Chair of the Friends of Streatham Hill Theatre said: *"I would like to personally thank the Mayor of London for his generous support for our campaign to save Streatham Hill Theatre. His support, and the many generous pledges from the community, mean we are now in touching distance of our crowdfunding target. Please help us get over the finishing line by pledging your support too."*

Jon Morgan, Director of the Theatres Trust said: *"Streatham Hill Theatre is a theatre at risk that has great potential to reopen for theatrical use. The lavish interior is still in extraordinary condition and it is a great shame that the public do not get to see it. There are not many theatres of this scale that could be restored and this funding from the Mayor of London will help the friends group to establish a route to getting this building active once again."*

Streatham's MP, Bell Riberio-Addy MP said: *"I'm delighted to hear Streatham Hill Theatre has secured Mayoral funding to pursue its renovation project. The theatre is an iconic piece of local architecture and I welcome and support efforts to refashion it into a community multi-arts venue, where we can showcase our rich local culture. The sheer scale of donations towards the Save Streatham Hill Theatre Campaign from Streatham locals only goes to show how great our community is at pulling together for the causes we care about."*

Cllr Sonia Winifred, Lambeth Cabinet Member for Equalities and Culture, said: *“This contribution from the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan is great news for Streatham, and great news for Lambeth. Streatham Hill Theatre is an important local asset that we want to see working for our community, as part of our commitment to preserving our heritage and culture in our diverse borough for future generations. I’d encourage as many residents as possible to get behind this campaign and help reach the final crowdfunding target.”*

At the recent 90th anniversary of the theatre’s opening, Simon Callow said: *“Streatham Hill Theatre is the last testament of one of the great, great theatre architects [W. G. R. Sprague]. It’s probably impossible nowadays to sustain a theatre of this large seating capacity but one way or another its spirit and physical integrity must be preserved so that the whole community can use it.”*

And actress Catherine Russell added: *“It would be absolutely fantastic if the whole building could be used for the community and for live theatre. And it would help the whole area, particularly invigorating bars and restaurants.”*

[ENDS]

Press enquiries, including photos and video:

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The Friends website www.streathamhilltheatre.org has press resources, including video and photographs of the campaign and the theatre.

Notes for Editors

1. The Save Streatham Hill Theatre crowdfunding campaign was launched on 28th January 2020. By the Monday 9th March it had pledges of £11,245 from 331 backers. Full details of the campaign are at www.save.streathamhilltheatre.org
2. Streatham Hill Theatre was opened in 1929. It was bombed in WW2 but was repaired and reopened in 1950. It closed to theatre in 1962, becoming a bingo hall. Much of the original theatre and its equipment remain. Small scale theatre returned via Streatham Theatre Company from 2013 to 2016. Bingo ceased in 2017, leaving only a small 24/7 slot machine lounge operated by leaseholders Praesepe plc.
3. The theatre has a stage the size of the London Palladium’s stage and was designed by the architect, W.G.R Sprague who designed many of the great West End theatres including the Aldwych, Novello, and Gielgud Theatres.
4. The theatre was granted a Grade 2 listing in 1994 as *“an unusually lavish example of a theatre built in the short-lived revival of building in 1929-30; as a suburban example of this date the building may be unique”*. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the->

[list/listentry/1244564](#)

5. The theatre was added to the Theatres Trust Theatres at Risk Register in 2017 when the bingo closed, with much of the building unused, and the risk of development or splitting off parts of the building a concern. <http://www.theatretrust.org.uk/how-we-help/theatres-at-risk/484-streatham-hill-theatre>
6. In 2018 Lambeth Council approved The Friends' nomination of Streatham Hill Theatre as an Asset of Community Value (ACV), which was then appealed by the owners. After a flashmob demonstration of support by over 1000 people in November 2018, ACV status was confirmed in early 2019. More on our website www.streathamhilltheatre.org
7. Simon Callow was born in Streatham and went on to become a famous star of stage and screen, as well as an author. His most recent book is *London's Great Theatres* with photographer Derry Moore.
8. Catherine Russell was born locally and lives in Streatham. She has extensive stage and screen experience but is currently best known for her role as Serena Campbell in the BBC medical drama *Holby City*.
9. A video of Catherine Russell and Simon Callow CBE speaking about their support for our campaign is here save.streathamhilltheatre.org
10. Crowdfund London is an initiative of the Mayor of London - see "*Mayor boosts local 'good growth' projects with £24 million*" at <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/mayor-boosts-good-growth-projects-with-24m>