

Subject:	Brighton Dome Brighton Festival Report 2020/21/22		
Date of Meeting:	11 March 2021		
Report of:	Executive Director Economy, Environment and Culture		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Branwen Lorigan	Tel: 01273 292571
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival is a key cultural asset which enhances the city's reputation national and internationally. The organisation is recognised for artistic excellence as well as for supporting a wide range of creative initiatives for young people and communities across Brighton and Hove.
- 1.2 The organisation has been greatly affected by the pandemic, which has fundamentally shifted the operation of the Dome and its associated services over the past twelve months. The Council provides annual funding for Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival as part of the lease arrangements. This report provides detail on the delivery of alternative actions by the organisation over the period of closure, in addition to plans for reopening in 2021/22.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee note the impact of the pandemic on Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival.
- 2.2 That the Committee agrees that a report on the operations and benefits for the city of this organisation be presented annually to this Committee.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Funding to Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival (BDBF) is one of the principal investments Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) makes in arts and culture. Brighton Dome is a Grade I listed buildings owned by BHCC. It provides a programme of work across all art forms and delivers the annual Brighton Festival in May. There are three spaces within Brighton Dome: the Concert Hall, the Corn Exchange and the Studio Theatre. Brighton Dome hosts Brighton & Hove Music & Arts Service and East Sussex Music Service.
- 3.2 BDBF has an annual turnover of £12.5m and is a registered charity. A recent economic impact study indicates the organisation's activities support 1125 FTE jobs in the city centre and, together with the Royal Pavilion & Museums, contributes £60m per year to the local economy.

- 3.3 This report describes the impact of COVID-19 on BDBF along with some principles governing its future planning.

Legal Structure & Funding

- 3.4 BDBF was established as a registered charity 'Brighton Festival Limited' in 1999, its predecessor Brighton Festival Society having been formed in 1966.
- 3.5 In 1999 BHCC partnered with BDBF to secure a major National Lottery Capital investment to refurbish the Brighton Dome Concert Hall and Brighton Museum & Art Gallery. The refurbishment was completed in 2003. A condition of the £22m capital investment towards Brighton Dome Concert Hall was the establishment of the charitable trust to act as the custodian and operator of the Concert Hall, Corn Exchange and Studio Theatre. On 30th April 1999 the council set up a 50-year lease agreement with annual revenue funding to BDBF linked to the lease, whilst retaining freehold ownership of the buildings. There are 29 years remaining.
- 3.6 Councillors are appointed to serve three-year terms as Trustees (currently Cllr McCafferty and Cllr O'Quinn) with BHCC officers observing board meetings and finance committee meetings. The Lease determines the obligations on BDBF and requires the city council to provide funding to support the activity of both Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival. In 2020/21 this funding amounted to £1,766,531.
- 3.7 In 2019/20 (the last full operating year) the charity earned 63% of its operating income from ticket sales, sponsorship, catering and the private event income channelled through the trading company (Brighton Dome and Festival (Trading) Limited) and 37% of its income through grants and donations. 31% of income comes from the Charity's two public funders: BHCC and Arts Council England (ACE). The Charity is a long-standing ACE National Portfolio Organisation with just over £4,500,000 of committed funding in the period from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2022.
- 3.8 Creative Learning programmes, principally for children & young people, have been significantly enhanced since the addition of the Brighton & Hove Music Service in 2017 and the East Sussex Music Service in 2019. Total expenditure on Creative Learning activities totalled £2,817,673.
- 3.9 BDBF is a Living Wage Employer and has 143 permanent employees, 84 casual music teachers and around 200 casual staff working across venue operations. Existing close working relationships with trade unions BECTU and NUTs have been furthered strengthened during 2020 in the common (and successful) aim to protect jobs.

2019/20 Programme outcomes

- 3.10 Total occupancy at Brighton Dome Concert Hall during 2019/20 was 83%. Across the year where the Concert Hall, Corn Exchange and Studio Theatre have been in operation the organisation's audience reach is in excess of 650,000. With one space in operation, during the redevelopment of the Corn Exchange and Studio Theatre, audience reach achieved has been just over 60% of that total, at 400,000.

- 3.11 2019/20 saw an extensive programme of free open days and events attracting a attendance of 18,022, including a Pride Open Day in August 2019 which attracted over 3,000 attenders, International Women’s Day in partnership with Brighton Women’s Centre (Mar) and Black History Month Family Day (Oct) both attracted over 4,000 attenders. Other events and regulars included Heritage Open Day (Sep), Christmas Open Day (Dec), Disabled Access Day (Feb) and Refugee Week Community Day (June). An expanding programme of assisted performances included two Audio Described, 15 BSL and four relaxed Performances as well as four touch tours across the programme of year-round events.

Royal Pavilion Estate Phase One: Capital Project

- 3.12 Phase one of the Royal Pavilion Estate masterplan currently on site sees the restoration and redevelopment of the Council’s Grade I listed Corn Exchange and Grade II listed Studio Theatre, protecting at-risk heritage buildings, lowering environmental impact and operating costs and providing new space for community and artist rehearsals.
- 3.13 Managed by BHCC’s Major Projects team, the project has attracted over £20.1m of investment from ACE, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Coast to Capital LEP and private fundraising. Project costs have increased since works began on site in February 2017 due to finds on site including a former Quaker burial ground, significant structural defects in the 200 year old Corn Exchange timber roof and wall frame, and the former Main Contractor leaving site and entering administration. The project is now scheduled for completion at the end of 2021.

2020 / 2021 Covid-19 Impact

- 3.14 On 17 March 2020 Brighton Dome closed as a result of Covid-19 restrictions and the following day Brighton Festival 2020 was cancelled. 67% of its self-generated income was at immediate risk.
- 3.15 BDBF required additional support to retain staff and meet its other obligations because of the loss of earned income. £445,000 was secured in ACE Emergency Funds for costs through to 30 September; £493,000 and £348,000 (for music services) from Culture Recovery Fund for activity October 2020 – March 2021 alongside other fundraising activity, notably BDBF’s crowdfunder which raised £71,000 to ‘Bring Back Brighton Dome’ from 963 donors.
- 3.16 BDBF employees undertook to work together to ensure the organisation’s survival and committed to avoiding compulsory redundancies, so sadly prevalent across theatres and cultural venues elsewhere. The organisation has utilised the government’s Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme with over 80% of staff furloughed at some points in the year. Staff have additionally agreed variations to hours and pay if required until August 2021.
- 3.17 Across the remainder of 2020 BDBF continued to deliver experiences online for audiences (theatre, spoken word, literature and music events both live-streamed and made for online) and engagement with children and young people. The two music services developed an entirely online offer and continued to teach around 3000 students a week as well as creating a Virtual Music Centre for extra-

curricular activity and special performance projects across genres, leading to some remarkable achievements by teachers and young people; a testament to their resilience and adaptability.

- 3.18 In the periods when socially distanced performances were permitted, Brighton Dome partnered with Brighton's grass-roots music venues to deliver 'Live is Alive', a series of gigs in support of live music in the City and raising funds (over £13,000) for grass-roots venues, and with Brighton Philharmonic Orchestra and Strings Attached for chamber music performances.
- 3.19 The Charity has also established a partnership with Brighton Artists Network to offer space for artists to develop work and rehearse behind closed doors while public performances are not possible. The Dome foyer reopened in partnership with social enterprise charity Team Domenica operating a weekday café.
- 3.20 BDBF has provided administrative and financial management support for the scoping, consultation and design phases of the city's Recovery Plan for Culture. The management committee for this phase of the Plan includes the CEO of BDBF, the MD of The Brighton Event Producers Independent Committee (EPIC), the Co-Chairs of What Next, a national movement that seeks to champion and strengthen the role of culture in our society, and BHCC officers. The initial consultation process involved over 100 representatives from the sector, both freelance and salaried.

Looking Ahead into 2021 – 2022

- 3.21 Between April and June 2020 the Trustees and Executive team developed a plan for managing the impact of Covid-19 and ensuring the organisation's future sustainability. Titled 'Recovery, Renewal, Reopening', the plan demonstrates financial viability through the two financial years 20/21 and 21/22, assuming significantly reduced activity through until October 2021. It also sets out principles to guide planning throughout the pandemic and for the future:
 - engage and connect with audiences and residents
 - be an open and porous organisation for artists and partners, facilitating and brokering new ways of working
 - reflect and celebrate the international outlook of Brighton & Hove
 - prioritise artistic work that enhances our distinctiveness and that of the city through:
 - a focus on marginalised voices, on inclusivity and social justice
 - a sense of physical location and scale
 - fostering partnerships nationally and internationally
 - exploring new technologies (specifically 5G) and developing our online offer
 - having a clearly curated, artist-led identity
 - develop artists of the future and deliver creative opportunities for all children & young people
 - protect jobs wherever possible and retain vital talent and skills in our permanent workforce
 - ensure the organisation's long-term financial and environmental sustainability

- 3.22 Brighton Festival 2021 will take place from 1-23 May with a full programme launch in March 2021.
- 3.23 Lemn Sissay returns as Guest Director with a substantially new programme along with some elements from the cancelled 2020 Festival. The Festival has been planned on a prudent basis with allowances for Covid-19 restrictions and social distancing but with the ability to scale up audience capacities across events if circumstances allow.
- 3.24 Initial testbed investment in 5G infrastructure (through partnership with Wired Sussex and Digital Catapult) has received a significant financial boost from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport via the 5G Create awards. This will deliver a 5G Powered Festival concept working with industry leaders Warner Music, O2 (Telefonica UK), Digital Catapult, Mativision, Metropolis and Sonosphere. The initiative will enable artists to collaborate creatively and audiences to engage and connect both remotely and live, using cutting edge technology.
- 3.25 The 5G Festival in late-2021 will engage with the music and events industry in the city and invest in talent and idea development so that Brighton can continue to be at the cutting edge of art and technology, combining to create new cultural experiences.
- 3.26 Through support from the Cultural Recovery Fund BDBF have implemented the Artist in House scheme. There are three awards of £10,000 to sustain an artists' creative practice and contribute their voice to Brighton Dome and Brighton Festival team and its ways of working and planning. BDBF received 55 applications with 69% of applicants identifying as diverse in one or more ways. The selected artists will be announced at the beginning of March.
- 3.30 Future Creators, as the delivery partner for BDBF, have been approved as a Kickstart Gateway Organisation. As a Kickstart Gateway Organisation BDBF are supporting young people into employment in the creative industries.
- 3.31 Kickstart Gateway organisations apply for Kickstart Scheme grants on behalf of employers. The grants provide funding to create new job placements for 16- to 24-year-olds on Universal Credit who are at risk of long-term unemployment. Employers of all sizes can apply for funding which covers 100% of the National Minimum Wage for 25 hours per week for a total of 6 months. Employers are required to provide additional support beyond on the job training, such as writing a CV, interview preparation and job searching skills.
- 3.32 To date 18 organisations have secured 100 Kickstart Job placements, providing opportunities for young people to secure work experience and build their confidence and resilience to move on to sustainable work. As a Kickstarter organisation, Future Creators have made a successful bid to the Governments Flexible Support Fund (FSF). This has enabled 180 young people to receive pre-employment support over a 6-month period. FSF is intended to help Jobcentre Plus Service (JCP) Leaders deliver elements of their support services in the way they see fit for their Districts.

- 3.35 Future Creators have developed sector specific provision to address this gap, designed to enable JCP customers aged 18 to 24, receiving Universal Credit, (including those furthest from opportunities) and with an interest in the Cultural and Creative industries, to explore and prepare for the opportunity to secure employment within this sector, including applications for Kickstart placements that have been secured through BDBF Gateway provision.

4 ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 There are no alternative options to consider. BDBF is a well-established Charity operating successfully. Whilst the Pandemic has caused the venue to be closed for 12 months, it is fully anticipated that it will re-open and return to normal operations by the end of 2021.

5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 BDBF has a positive and proactive approach to community engagement. The free Open days referred to in point 3.11 above is an example of this. The community initiative 'Our Place' involves local steering groups of Hangleton and Knoll and East Brighton together with Brighton People's Theatre curating two days of Festival programming is embedded in local communities. For the third year in 2019 'Pay It Forward' invited regular Festival audiences to donate a Festival ticket to someone unable to afford the opportunity. 725 donations for 'Pay It Forward' enabled 996 tickets distributed via 44 community organisations.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 BDBF has been able to weather the pandemic without redundancies over the course of 2020/21 because of the public funding it has received, both from BHCC and from ACE. Private funds have also been raised. This means the organisation is able to emerge quickly when the government permits large indoor gatherings in venues to resume.
- 6.2 The Charity is able to sustain a low level of performance until October 2021 when it is anticipated that the Dome will return to full operation as a public venue with a full theatre programme. The Corn Exchange capital project is scheduled for completion at the end of this year, resulting in the entire venue once again making a significant contribution to cultural life for Brighton and Hove residents.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.
- 7.2 The Council has a contractual arrangement to provide funding to BDBF of £1.766m including support for the annual Brighton Festival which is built into the council's budget. In addition, the council provides an annual contribution to a sinking fund to support the high maintenance costs of the Grade 1 listed building.

This contribution is £0.221m in 2020/21 and forms part of the council's Planned Maintenance Budget.

Finance Officer Consulted: James Hengeveld

Date: 17/02/21

Legal Implications:

- 7.3 The contractual arrangements with BDBF are described in the body of the report. There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations.

Lawyer Consulted:

Alice Rowland

Date: 18/2/21

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 BDBF continues to receive a rating of 'strong' from ACE for its Creative Case for Diversity, appraising both the inclusivity of its public-facing programme, audience accessibility and the organisation's work to increase the diversity of its workforce and its trustee body. An Equality Action Plan is monitored by an action group made up of representatives from all levels of the organisation and describes the partnerships across the community that help to achieve set targets.
- 7.4 The focus of recent work has been to improve the number of applications during recruitment from Black and Minority Ethnic people and from people with disabilities (by 10%). In the autumn of 2019, the organisation recruited a number of new Trustees to its board with a wealth of valuable experience and who are more representative of the local community. The board is currently chaired by Danny Homan, formerly Chief of Staff for the Big Lottery Fund and part of the leadership team at Historic Royal Places.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.5 There are no sustainability implications.

Brexit Implications:

- 7.6 There are no Brexit implications.

Any Other Significant Implications: None

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.5 There are no crime and disorder implications. However, the Creative Learning strand of BDBF which works with over 5,000 young people each week, engages young people in the arts and creativity and provides meaningful activities during the evening and at weekends.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 7.6 There are no risk and opportunity management implications for the Council. The Arts Fund is managed via the lease with BDBF and this is fixed. The Charity is a professionally managed and governed organisation which assesses risk and opportunity carefully to ensure it is able to fulfil its obligations under the lease.

Public Health Implications:

- 7.7 There are no public health implications.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 7.8 BDBF is a major employer and a catalyst for creative collaborations which enhance the city's reputation for leading the arts in England. A return to full operation in 2021/22 is important for generating community wealth and as positive contributor to mental health and well-being for residents. Brighton and Hove has one of the highest levels of arts participation in the UK. Should government guidance allow the Brighton Festival to take place in any form, it will be a visible signal that the arts and culture are ready to restart and livelihoods can begin to be restored.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices: None