

BUILDINGS REPORT

2020 has been the most unusual year for our precious theatre building. When we're in the midst of one of our productions or a busy weekend of visiting events, we often wish for a break in the season to get jobs done around the venue. Well, 2020 has given us that chance and we're very grateful to those members that have been able to help us improve and maintain the Hip during these most difficult times.

Amongst many other smaller tasks, our volunteers have carried out some major projects including the removal of the front of house lighting bar, PATT testing, MEP servicing and the installation of a new tab track in the foyer to allow it to be a more flexible performance space. To our future audiences, the most obvious of these will be the removal of the old lighting platform at the rear of the circle. A new lighting control room has been created in the former projection room, complete with new openings for followspot locations. This will look much neater and also mean future audiences won't be able to hear the cues from the lighting platform during the productions (or the rustle of the haribo bag!) We've also blocked the windows in the viewing room to prevent natural light spilling into the auditorium and to allow for alternative uses for this space. Another major project has been to relocate the dimmer room from the dressing room level to the fly floor. This has the double effect of being in a more convenient location for the lighting team but also taking it away from any future flood risk.

We're also working on a major project to transform the facade of the Hip. This will include the restoration of the exterior of the Props Room Bar including a new double glazed shop front and repointing. We are replacing all of the windows, installing new architectural lighting, installing new illuminated poster boards and a digital display screen along with new signage to increase the prominence of the Hippodrome. We're also planning to replace the access ramp. It's all very exciting and you'll be sure to see the difference when the works are completed early next year. This has been partly funded by the a Town Deal Grant, along with additional grants from organisations including Todmorden Lions, The Garfield Weston Foundation and The Community Foundation For Calderdale. A huge thanks to George Mitchell for all his work in applying for grants and identifying little pots of funding that we can qualify for.

This year has been exceptionally difficult for many people who work in the creative industries. We're really grateful for the time that many of our tech

volunteers have spent at the theatre, using their available time to support our community arts venue, despite their own personal challenges. I want to make a special mention of David Winslow who has spent many hundreds of hours at the Hip since March, not only checking the Hippodrome is still standing but also completing improvement works ranging from renovating the back of house toilet to alterations in the bar. I want to say a huge thank you to everyone who has helped, whether by spending hours on a major project or just spending an evening painting a wall. I really hope that you'll be able to see the benefit of all these works when we finally get to throw open our doors again.

We know that COVID may be with us for some time to come and this will affect the way we can operate. We're looking at the ways we can make changes to the Hippodrome that will allow us to reopen in a safe way when that time comes. Some of these changes will be small and low cost whilst others will be more substantial. Again, George is looking at sources of funding to help us cover the costs of these changes.

There will be a lot of work needed to get us ready for that day when we can finally reopen to you, our wonderful volunteers and supporters. We can't be sure when that day will be yet but we hope, depending on the circumstances, that we'll be able to hold a series of sessions at the Hip which resemble something like the previous Jobs Days and Clean Up Days. We'll be sure to share details of any of these events through the website, Facebook and future newsletters.