

NEWHAMPTON ARTS CENTRE: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

OUR MISSION

To create opportunities for every citizen of Wolverhampton to take part in and enjoy the arts at all stages of life.

OUR VISION

A world-class arts centre rooted in our communities that brings great artists to perform in the best live venue in the city; alongside opportunities to take part that provide a springboard for personal creativity and routes to purpose and wellbeing. All this in a renovated historic location that is the beating heart of Wolverhampton's creative industries.

NEWHAMPTON ARTS CENTRE

NAC came into being to manage the site in 2000, initially in partnership with the College and Council. Since 2014 it has managed the entire site. There are four main areas of activity: a live events programme of approx. 125 shows per year (music, comedy, theatre etc.); room hire that sees over 20 weekly courses and classes delivered onsite together with one-off bookings; rental of workspace that supports over 30 creative and community businesses onsite including recording studios, youth theatre, social care and visual artists. Finally there is an active community and education programme on and off-site. We employ sixteen people directly, and the site supports 55 jobs and the total turnover of all the businesses based here is over £2.5 million.

Since 2018 NAC has been a National Portfolio organisation of Arts Council England and has secured support for its activities from many trusts and foundations including Esmee Fairbairn, Paul Hamlyn, Garfield Weston, Foyle etc as well as additional investment from ACE for its current Place Partnership Fund programme.

OUR BUILDING

Newhampton Arts Centre is the current occupier of a historic site in Wolverhampton that has been a centre for education and creativity for over 125 years. The current site comprises two-storey Victorian school buildings with an additional modern wing arranged in a quadrangle around a large central open area.

In 1892 the Wolverhampton Lower School was built on the site to offer education to boys and girls up to the age of 14. It became the Wolverhampton Municipal Grammar School in the early twentieth-century and for almost 90 years generations of Wolverhampton pupils attended from across the city. In 1980 the school became comprehensive and ceased to operate as a school in 1990. The previous capital project was developed using City Challenge funds by Wolverhampton City Council and City of Wolverhampton College during the 1990s and in 2000 Newhampton Arts Centre opened.

THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Our site is substantial: there are four main blocks and over 110 separate rooms. The previous capital programme in the late nineteen-nineties saw some redecoration and refurbishment of the historic buildings, and the erection of new builds that comprise the present Studio Block and café/toilet block. Since then only the most basic routine maintenance and repair has been undertaken. The site is showing its age and does not meet modern environmental or access standards; the use of the site has changed substantially; and deterioration in structural elements that were not addressed thirty years ago, or in some cases since 1892, now threatens the ongoing viability of the site.

Its ownership has been shared between the City of Wolverhampton College and Wolverhampton City Council. For the past five years NAC, the College and the Council have worked to resolve this – and the ownership issues preventing external investment and a capital programme progressing will very shortly be resolved. NAC will have a 125-year lease on the site at a peppercorn rent with the sole owner Wolverhampton City Council.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME: PROGRESS TO DATE

Much preparatory, feasibility and design work on the early phases of the project have already been done – with the ultimate goal of a site-wide redevelopment and refurbishment equipping the city's arts centre for another thirty years of service.

In 2022 an Options Appraisal on the future of the site was undertaken with APEC Architects commissioned using an Architectural Heritage Foundation grant.

The awarding of £1.5 million in summer 2023 from the Towns Fund programme enabled the City Council and NAC together to achieve a number of key targets:

- The purchase of the College portion of the site by the Council and the legal work on the lease between the Council and NAC
- The replacement of condemned boilers on half of the site which had been without heating for 18 months.

- The refurbishment of the theatre toilet block
- The commissioning of a Fundraising Feasibility Study from Achates.
- A full Feasibility Study for the capital redevelopment from APEC Architects including a proposed phasing of the work.
- Business planning for the capital and post-capital phases of operation
- The creation of a significant match funding pot to enable the initial phases of fundraising for the capital programme to proceed as speedily as possible.

This programme of work will complete by April 2025 and we now need to proceed to the next phases of the capital programme – the implementation of the Fundraising Feasibility Study and a phase one schedule of works being finalised by APEC using another grant from AHF.

LASTLY...OUR NAME

Though it has served us well for 25 years, Newhampton Arts Centre is not a name that matches our future ambitions and development plans. From April 2025 we will change our public and legal name to reflect our strategic place in the city's cultural infrastructure.

To drive these next phases NAC seeks a Capital Campaign Manager, a senior post within the organisation to take responsibility for the programme and join Trevelyan Wright, CEO; and Wendy Stephens, Chair of the Board of Trustees in securing the future of NAC.