



Equity branch secretaries briefing

What is it?

It is a campaign to encourage theatres across the UK to mobilise audiences to voice their support for their local Council giving financial support to theatres.

Who is behind the campaign?

The campaign has been created by Equity, The Stage and the TMA.

It is being sponsored by programme publisher John Good and Cog Design

Supporters include the Society of London Theatre, Dance UK, the Musicians' Union, BECTU, the Writers Guild of Great Britain.

Why now?

The news from regional theatre is not good. Financial pressure from Government on local Council's means their support for theatres is under threat. So far this year Newcastle's Theatre Royal, Northern Stage and Live Theatre, Sheffield's Lyceum, Crucible and the Studio and Stoke-on-Trent's New Vic Theatre have been hit with cuts in Council funding totalling around £200,000. This comes on top of the news that Taunton's Brewhouse Theatre has closed as a result of Somerset cutting its arts budget by 100%.

Why are we campaigning with audiences?

Audiences love their local theatres but do not necessarily understand the importance of public funding in keeping them open, keep ticket prices affordable, and keep delivering high quality education and outreach work. This campaign will inform audiences and turn them into advocates for theatre funding with local MPs and Council Leaders.

What are we asking audience members to do?

Audience Members will be asked to do two things:

1. Send a postcard to their Council Leader saying how much they value the Council's investment in their local theatre
2. Sign up to the national www.mytheatrematters.com website with their email address and postcode so they can be contacted again in the future about issues in their own area, further afield or nationally.

What do you want me as an Equity Branch Secretary to do?

Put it on the agenda of your next Branch meeting. Talk to your Equity organiser about how your branch can get involved in the campaign.



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What campaign materials are there?

- **Web site** – mytheatrematters.com is packed with information about the campaign and is where audience members, Equity members and others can sign up as supporters.
- **Postcard** – postcards these will be distributed to theatres across the UK. Audience members can sign them and put them in a collection box in the foyer of participating theatres. They can also tear off a section and post it to their local Council leader.
- **Collection boxes for postcards** – in venues
- **Posters in venues** - A range of posters for use in theatres guiding people to the website or to ask a member of theatre staff
- **Pin badges** –free enamel pin badges with the campaign message
- **Adverts in programmes** – matching the posters, a range of stock adverts in different shapes to that could be included in theatres' programmes and brochures.
- **Articles for programmes** – as the campaign progresses Equity will be asking high-profile members to write article for theatre programmes.
- **Curtain call announcements** – casts and managements encouraged to give key messages to audiences at the end of shows explaining the threat to their local theatre and encouraging participation in the campaign.
- **Twitter** – @theatre_matters
- **Facebook page** - sharing news of threats and successes in safeguarding local theatres.
- **Weekly coverage in The Stage** – at least a page a week focused on the importance of local theatre to its audiences using strands such as 'why my theatre is the most beautiful in the UK', 'why my theatre is the most welcoming in the UK', etc. (this could also link to the TMA Awards). Badging of all stories related to funding threats to theatres with 'My Theatre Matters!'