

BTW Ltd

Annual Meeting Report 2014-2015



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Biggar Theatre Workshop

Company limited by guarantee SC368706
www.biggarcornexchange.org.uk/
Registered as a Scottish Charity SC032641
www.biggartheatreworkshop.org.uk/

1. Introduction

Biggar Corn Exchange is a community resource, operated by Biggar Theatre Workshop Ltd. (BTW), on a long term lease from South Lanarkshire Council. BTW is a registered Scottish Charity.

This report is a brief summary of where the Corn Exchange has reached in its development, current activities, and financial position. The report was presented verbally at the Annual meeting on 24 September 2015, and subsequently issued to all members, supporters, and volunteers on the database.

1.1. Attendees

Lesley Armstrong, Anne Brown, Mike Chad, Barbara Duffner, Gil Dunn, Jenni Featherstone (after 8.15pm), Lesley MacLachlan, Anna McCosh, Chris McCosh, Alistair Ramsay

1.2. Apologies

Judy Jordan, Russell Glashan, James Dawnay, Loraine Stewart, Joanne Grant, Malcolm Muir, Elaine Fyfe, Jim Softley, Una Stewart, Jill & Ian Murray, George Burns, Meg Macdonald

2. BTW Ltd Trustees, and terms of office

2.1. Trustees

There are seven Trustees, who are jointly responsible for governance of BTW Ltd, which is both a registered Scottish Charity, and a company limited by Guarantee. In addition to this overall responsibility, most Trustees have also taken on specific duties as follows:

	<i>Responsible for</i>
George Burns:	Programme planning, Premises Licence holder, Bar manager
Mike Chad:	Chair of Trustees, Programme Planning, CXYP, <i>Building Maintenance</i> , Biggar Toilets
Barbara Duffner:	Company Secretary, CXYP, Biggar toilets, 'governance'
Iona Goldie	
Meg MacDonald:	Century Club
Malcolm Muir:	Productions, <i>Building maintenance</i> , technical
Rosie Wallace:	Chair of Productions Committee

2.2. Operations Manager and Treasurer

Operations Manager	Lesley Armstrong
Treasurer	Jenni Featherstone

2.3. Committees

Operational planning and monitoring is carried out by five sub-committees. Interested parties can be co-opted as appropriate. To ensure good governance and communication, it is BTW policy that all committees should include a minimum of two Trustees.

<i>BTW Committee</i>	<i>Trustee representation</i>
BTW Productions:	Malcolm and Rosie
Programme Planning:	Mike and George
CXYP (youth):	Mike and Barbara

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Building Maintenance:	Mike and Malcolm
Biggar Community Toilets:	Mike and Barbara

Each of the Trustees has now served for a number of years, and succession planning is becoming important. It is proposed that terms of office should be limited, and the Trustees would welcome contact from anyone who feels they would like to become involved. We are looking in particular for those with buildings/facilities experience. If you have time, interest, relevant knowledge, or experience, please contact the Secretary, Barbara Duffner (contact details on front page)

3. Adult theatre – shows/plans

One of the main activities of BTW is the preparation of drama productions. There are many benefits, including:

- Provision of local live drama performance for the community in Biggar and surrounding area.
- Opportunities for aspiring actors to develop their skills, and take part in such live performance.
- Opportunities for those who are interested in the essential technical, backstage, and support activities to learn about, and take part in live amateur theatre.
- Generation of much needed revenue, to help make the Corn Exchange sustainable as a community resource

Planned performances for the next 12 months include:

- One Act Stand - two one act plays: “Effie's Burning” and “Mr Kolpert”; 14 - 17 October 2015
- Mostly Musicals - 23 October 2015
- Pantomime – “Mother Goose”; 1-5 December 2015
- Two one act Scottish plays, “Cock-a-doodle-doo” and “Nothing ever happens here”; 6-9 April 2016 (Director: Ian Henderson, auditions: Sun 13 Dec)
- Godspell (Director: BJ McComis, provisionally October 2016)

4. Corn Exchange Young Performers (CXYP)

One of the most important services which BTW offers within the local community is the youth theatre group – “CXYP”. At present, there is little or no such provision for young people within the schools, and the group within the Corn Exchange is filling an important gap.

4.1. Leadership

We are very fortunate to have Sam Swinton as group leader and coordinator. A former pupil of Biggar High School, Sam is qualified in the teaching of drama, and brings this knowledge, plus lots of enthusiasm, to his role. Two senior High School pupils act as workshop assistants. We thus have a stable core of leadership, which is beneficial to all concerned.

There are three weekly term-time drama groups, for children between the ages of 5 and 18. They have already created and performed several original youth theatre productions.

4.2. P1-3 Aims

- To encourage self-expression through role play, voice and movement.
- To experience enjoyment through creativity and to contribute to other people’s enjoyment through creative performance.
- To develop communication skills.
- To develop literacy skills.
- To develop a basic level of confidence in their artistic ability.

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4.3. P4-7 Aims

- To be able to devise, rehearse and perform their own dramas with support.
- To further develop communication and literacy skills.
- To creatively assist one other in a supportive environment.
- To develop an increased level of confidence in their artistic ability.

4.4. High School Aims

- To be able to devise, rehearse and perform their own dramas with conviction.
- To take active involvement in every aspect of their theatrical production(s).
- To develop a solid level of confidence in their artistic ability.

4.5. Benefits of Drama

- Increased self-esteem and confidence
- Encourages creativity and self-expression
- Makes use of key skills - reading, writing, speaking and social interaction.

4.6. New Members are always welcome!

Tuesdays during School term time

P1-3: 15:15 - 16:15

P4-7: 16:30 - 18:00

High School: 19:00 - 21:00

5. Annual report & accounts

BTW Ltd must submit annual accounts to both OSCR, and Companies House. Although not a full-scale audit, the accounts are prepared by a Chartered Accountant, who also provides some advice and opinion on financial performance.

In financial terms, the Trustees' priority is to ensure that we can operate the facility as a sustainable going concern, and maintain sufficient reserves to meet our obligation to maintain the building (we have a 25-year full maintaining and repairing lease)

Since BTW was incorporated in 2009, we have managed to achieve a small surplus, until this year, where we have seen a downturn.

The net **deficit** for 2014/15 year: **£3,364**. The main factors are significant reduction in contributions from:

- Hall hire – **down 10%** to £12,381
- Bar – **down 47%** to £2,938
- Productions – **down 34%** to £4,396

The Trustees will be looking closely at performance, seeking to get back on track. In the meantime, we have sufficient reserves to allow for a long term view to be taken, including seeking grant funding where available. We are grateful to South Lanarkshire Council and the Clyde Wind Farm Fund for supporting specific initiatives over the last year. Copies of the full accounts are available from the Secretary.

6. BTW Membership

BTW welcomes new members at any time. Membership is open to all, and for those who wish to participate in drama or music productions, membership is mandatory.

7. Century Club

The Century Club continues to operate as it always has done, with six draws annually. The Club has always been a valuable source of funds. We are hoping to attract more members to the Club, to help ensure that a useful surplus is generated.

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8. The building

We are awaiting a revision of our lease, to allow more flexibility in use of contractors (this will, for example, allow internal plasterwork to be repaired at a reasonable cost).

For no particular reason, this seems to be a very slow process. The updated lease will incorporate the clock tower, the roof of which has been fully repaired and made properly watertight. We will receive an annual contribution from SLC in return for taking responsibility for maintenance.

Outstanding maintenance issues include external painting of window frames.

9. Volunteers, FoH and Bar

9.1. Volunteers

Thank you to all our volunteers who give up their time (and energy) to make the Corn Exchange the thriving community multi-purpose venue it is today. We rely on our volunteers for help in many areas. There are many volunteering opportunities; something for everyone:-

- Front of House
- Bar
- Setting up for events
- Regular inspections of the premises/fire exits/alarm system
- Simple DIY, set construction
- Backstage Crew
- Props, costumes, make up
- Fundraising
- Distribution of marketing materials
- Technical assistance (sound & light)

Volunteering is an opportunity to become involved in the community, learn new skills, enhance your CV, make new friends and see some great shows. No experience is necessary (training will be given) and you can commit as little or as much time as you would like.

To volunteer, complete the volunteer opportunity questionnaire or have an informal chat with Lesley or any of the trustees.

9.2. Training

We hold regular training sessions for our volunteers and for new volunteers we always give them the opportunity to come along and see what is involved before committing themselves.

9.3. Front of House

We are actively seeking more volunteers who would like to take on the role of Front of House at events.

The Front of House volunteer is effectively the person in charge at any particular event. FOH is responsible for opening up, closing up, dealing with the event organiser or hirer and making sure order is maintained throughout the event. There is a dedicated FOH handbook and training would be provided. Anyone interested in taking on the role of FOH would also be invited to shadow the FOH volunteer at a couple of events before being asked to take on the role themselves.

9.4. Bar report

Income generated from the bar makes an important contribution to the funding of the Corn Exchange, in addition to enhancing the experience of visitors.

Unfortunately net takings from the bar were down last year partly due to the changes to the drink drive limits. We are glad to see the Dukes of Uke back which should help our bar revenue!

We are currently reviewing our pricing structure together with the drinks we stock. It is our intention to trial offering a larger selection of soft drink options.

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10. Friends of the Corn Exchange

A new, independent, group - "Friends of the Corn Exchange" has recently been established.

It is a community organisation, set up to raise funds to contribute towards the maintenance and development of the Grade B listed Corn Exchange in Biggar, as a cultural hub and performing arts centre.

You can become a Friend for as little as £10 a year. Your financial support will contribute towards:

- the improvement of amenities
- the maintenance of the fabric of the building.
- support for events, including BTW productions
- marketing and promotional activities
- promotion of the Corn Exchange as a Performing Arts Centre and cultural hub
- increasing awareness of the Corn Exchange as a community resource, run by the community for the community
- increasing awareness of the Corn Exchange as a venue for hire
- encouragement of the arts in Biggar.

Membership forms are available from Lesley Maclachlan, Red House, 197 High Street, Biggar, ML12 6DJ

11. Biggar Community Toilets

South Lanarkshire Council (SLC) decided to close all public toilets within its estate, including those in Biggar. As Biggar's public toilets are in the Corn Exchange building, the Trustees of BTW Ltd agreed to lead a working group, operating as a committee of BTW Ltd. with the intention of keeping the toilets open. It was also recognised that there were substantial benefits in linking this working group to an established Charity.

It is proposed that the facility will be unmanned, with automated door locking and un-locking at pre-determined times. (Times of opening and closing will be varied as appropriate). Cleaning will be undertaken twice daily, on a contract basis.

The group considered it necessary to establish a start-up fund of £30,000, to cover set up and first year costs. Donations in excess of £6,000 have already been received, or promised. Applications for grants, totalling £18,400, from the Common Good Fund and the Clyde Wind Farm Fund have been successful, subject to certain conditions being met.

Further donations - both one-off and regular (by Standing Order) are both necessary and welcome. Collecting boxes are available in local shops.

The Group issues an update on progress with this work every few weeks. Anyone who would like to be on the circulation list should email mike.chad@btconnect.com.

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