



ANVIL ARTS – OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPACT

Why we must protect and support Basingstoke's arts and entertainment venues

ABOUT ANVIL ARTS

Anvil Arts is the largest performing arts organisation in Hampshire and is at the heart of Basingstoke and Deane's cultural offering, with its three venues providing the best of the performing arts and entertainment for nearly 30 years.

The Anvil is nationally recognised as one of the top five concert halls in the UK, punching well above its weight in both the quality of the audience experience and the artists it attracts to the 1,400-seat venue. It is also home to The Forge – a cosy 100 seat studio. The Haymarket is a 400-seat theatre, part Grade II listed, in the town centre. Beyond the venues, the Trust runs an extensive community engagement programme, taking place in schools, community settings, and the town centre.

Anvil Arts has been run by an independent charity, The Anvil Trust, since 1993. The Trust runs The Anvil and The Haymarket buildings, which are owned by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.



THE OPPORTUNITIES POST-COVID

The Anvil Trust's Strategic Plan 2021-25 sets out a vision for making culture an integral part of Basingstoke's identity and reputation and bringing performing arts to all of the town's communities as the borough seeks to recover from COVID-19.

Basingstoke town centre was identified in a national report in January 2021 as the third most vulnerable in the country post-COVID. The report found that large-scale arts, entertainment and leisure provision was particularly vital in those town centres which had previously relied on retail and office workers.

We want to ensure the people of Basingstoke & Deane and the wider region enjoy a rich and diverse mix of cultural and entertainment experiences, and help the Borough become recognised as a centre of excellence for the performing arts.

We have committed to:

- Building our reputation as leading venues for performing arts and entertainment, offering excellence in all we do
- Giving a diverse range of local people opportunities to become involved with the performing arts
- Ensuring that the performing arts contribute to developing the skills and experience of young people across the borough
- Helping to make Basingstoke and Deane a place where everyone can live a happy and healthy life in a thriving built and natural environment

By 2025, we will:

- Deliver a diverse and inclusive programme of more than 400 performances annually that continue to bring together audiences of all kinds for shared experiences and enjoyment.
- Open up our three venues in new and innovative ways to the community, including using The Forge as a space for young musicians, and making The Haymarket a hub for families, particularly for performances aimed at the under 10s.
- Work with every school in the Borough to enhance delivery of creative activities in the curriculum, helping to improve educational attainment and social skills.
- Increase by 20% our programme of work with local young people and adults that face additional challenges, including those with special educational needs and people living with dementia, their carers and families.
- Extend the reach of our Learning and Engagement programme to include more activity for those with autism, their families and carers.

OUR IMPACT SINCE 1994

Since it opened in 1994, The Anvil has been a beacon for the town, bringing many of the world's greatest musicians to Basingstoke. We have sold over 5 million tickets, with people travelling from as far afield as Argentina and Japan to attend performances in our world-class hall. The image and reputation of Basingstoke has been enhanced with this strong cultural offer, just as the council leaders at the time had hoped and intended.

Since taking over, at the Council's request, the management of the previously failing Haymarket in 2007, we have brought in new audiences and widened the scope of the programme, with a successful emphasis on family audiences and theatre for under 10s. The Anvil Trust is the only Arts Council England music National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) in Hampshire – recognition for the national leadership role it plays in music performance across England.

Before COVID-19, our programme included delivering around 420 annual performances and a community engagement programme involving over 35,000 people. The quality and reputation of The Anvil in particular enables it to attract national and international performers.

The Anvil is associated with three of the UK's leading orchestras: the Philharmonia Orchestra, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra; and is a founder member of Music Beyond Mainstream, which produces and arranges tours for projects and artists who might otherwise only be seen in London.

Income generation

The Anvil Trust generates more than 60% of its income through its own activities. In 2019, we sold over 170,000 tickets, with approximately 50% of these to Basingstoke residents, from every ward in the Borough.

An independent study has shown that our activities generate £6 for the local economy for every £1 of public investment, and they support over 120 local jobs in addition to our own staff.

The audiences, performers and crew we bring to Basingstoke are vital to the town centre's infrastructure of hotels, shops, cafes and restaurants.

NPO status allows the Trust to bring in almost £1m of additional Arts Council England benefit to the town, through collaboration with other visiting NPOs.

The Anvil Trust has demonstrated 26 years of financial sustainability. In spite of reduced public investment, the budget has been consistently achieved every year.

Educational opportunities

In 2019, our community engagement programme reached 35,000 people in schools, care homes and community settings, including targeted activity in the five most deprived wards in the Borough.

With our national partnerships, we are able to bring projects to Basingstoke that otherwise would not take place here. For example, the Philharmonia Orchestra's *Virtual Orchestra* project that we brought to Festival Place was visited by over 18,000 people, the most popular of its four installations around the country.

- Our community education programme includes:
 - Almost 10,000 places in schools' projects, focusing on learning behaviours, supporting Ofsted requirements and providing opportunities for development.
 - Concerts with more than 1,400 young performers including Basingstoke, Hampshire and National Childrens' and Youth Orchestras and Bands to a total audience of over 7,000 people each year.
 - Relaxed performances for over 1,500 people with autism and other disabilities. Demand for these has risen by 240% in four years.
 - The Musication Station project every term in Festival Place provides free tutored musical instrument try-outs to hundreds of people, and signposting to further tuition.

THE IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED CUT IN COUNCIL INVESTMENT

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council is proposing to cut at least 50% of its investment to the Anvil Trust from 1 April 2021.

2021-22 is the final year of our current five-year agreement between the Trust and the Council for the management and operation of The Anvil and The Haymarket. The total investment from the Council has already reduced by 40% over the last seven years.

On top of this, the estimated impact of COVID-19 to The Anvil Trust with the closure of our venues over the last year is a loss of more than £1.4m in income. Over 60% of the Trust's income is generated through its programme and associated activities.

The Council's decision is in direct conflict with the UK Government's position, which through its £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund, has committed to protecting and preserving the country's arts and cultural organisations as we recover from the pandemic.

According to the Government's website, Here for Culture, **"Government is backing culture. We want you to do the same by supporting arts and cultural venues, cinemas and heritage sites in your community."**

A cut of 50% will at the very least mean:

- An immediate 10% increase in hire rates for all community organisations using The Anvil or The Haymarket, which will have a significant impact on hundreds of users.
- An immediate 33% increase in booking fees for tickets for future performances.
- An at least 60% reduction in our vital community engagement programmes, including work in schools, care homes, with young people with special educational needs, and people with dementia, their carers and families.
- Redundancies in an already small staff team, affecting the services we can provide.
- The removal of around £2.4m of business from the town centre at the point when it has been identified as the third most vulnerable in the country.

In the longer term, the knock-on effect of these increases could reduce our ability to attract top quality performers and sold-out audiences. This will negatively affect our income-generating activities such as bar and merchandise sales.

Fundraising is unlikely to make up such a large shortfall in council investment every year. Trusts and foundations typically support individual projects rather than ongoing items like maintenance of buildings which the Council owns.

Failing to provide adequate investment will damage our service to communities in Basingstoke and Deane at the very time that they most need help to recover and grow. It will also have a wider negative impact on the Borough's reputation and future economic prosperity.

April 2021

