

# APPENDICES

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Yeovil Town Council

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**Close announcement**

# THE OCTAGON THEATRE

***YOUR CHANCE TO REOPEN  
THE OCTAGON THEATRE***



**Public Consultation**



Wiltshire Council, particularly for target  
projects and services.





Yeovil Town Council

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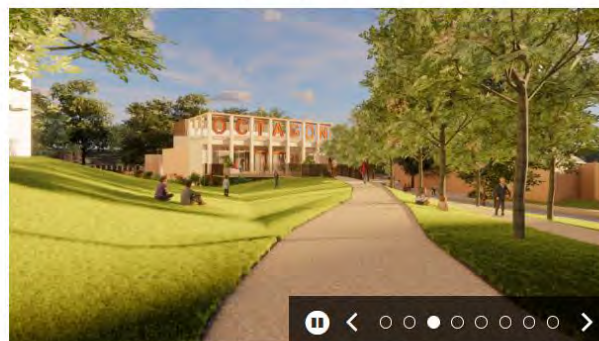
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## THE OCTAGON THEATRE

*YOUR CHANCE TO REOPEN THE OCTAGON THEATRE*



Public Consultation

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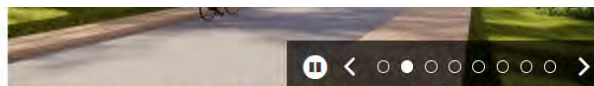
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## Public Consultation

Residents of the Parish of Yeovil are invited to share their views on a proposed contribution from Yeovil Town Council towards the Octagon Theatre Project.

In the coming days, letters accompanied by an A5 brochure outlining the project will be delivered to households within Yeovil Town. The letter will ask residents whether support the Council making a financial contribution to the project – funded in part through borrowing – and whether they agree to a resulting increase in the Council Tax precept to fund this borrowing.

Residents can take part in the consultation by completing the [form](#) enclosed with the letter and returning it to Yeovil Town Council, or by submitting their response online via the following link: [Online Form](#). Each member of the electorate of the household may respond.

The consultation ends on **21<sup>st</sup> September 2025**.

Other useful documents will be displayed here when available:

- [Letter sent to residents of the parish of Yeovil](#)
- [Octagon Theatre Project Consultation letter](#)
- [Brochure sent to residents of the parish of Yeovil](#)
- [An extended version of the project brochure](#)
- [Consultation Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Letter to Parishes – Financial Support for the Octagon Theatre Project](#)

## Public Information Events

To allow residents the opportunity to learn more and discuss the project and associated borrowing plans, two open events will be held at Westlands Entertainment Venue:





### Public Information Events

To allow residents the opportunity to learn more and discuss the project and associated borrowing plans, two open events will be held at Westlands Entertainment Venue:

- **Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2025, 2:00pm – 4:00pm**
- **Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2025, 6:00pm – 8:00pm**

### Project Funding Overview

The total project budget is **£15 million**, with funding sources as follows:

Funding Source	Amount
Government Funding (DCMS)	£10,000,000
Yeovil Town Council	£3,750,000
Ticket Levy (collected by Somerset Council)	£541,000
Fundraising and other grants	£444,000
Somerset Council	£265,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£15,000,000</b>

Of Yeovil Town Council's £3.75 million contribution, **£639,500** will be allocated from reserves. The remaining **£3,325,000** is proposed to be funded through



from reserves. The remaining **£3,325,000** is proposed to be funded through borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) over a period of 20 years, at an estimated rate of 5.8% This would result in **annual repayments of approximately £283,000.**

The repayments will be funded through:

- **£173,000** from the ticket levy
- **£110,000** from a proposed increase in Council Tax precept, equivalent to a **3.3% rise**

A breakdown of the expected impact on Council Tax bands is shown in the table below:

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Increase per year	7.73	9.02	10.31	11.60	14.18	16.76	19.33	23.20
Increase per week	0.15	0.17	0.20	0.22	0.27	0.32	0.37	0.44

#### Contact information

© 2025 Yeovil Town Council  
The Town House  
19 Union Street  
Yeovil, BA20 1PQ  
[01935 382424](tel:01935 382424)  
[ytic@yeovil.gov.uk](mailto:ytic@yeovil.gov.uk)

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*Creating a flagship cultural venue  
for the arts and entertainment  
in Yeovil, Somerset -*

# The Octagon Theatre





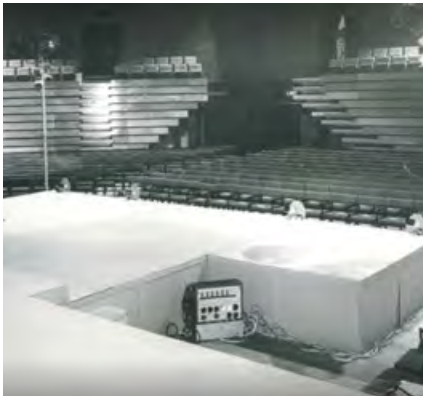
# Creating Somerset's Flagship Arts Venue

We are delighted to share with you an update on the redevelopment plans for the Octagon Theatre that will see the current building transformed into a flagship venue for the arts and entertainment. This project will transform the theatre into a creative hub that will ensure residents across Somerset can enjoy amazing performances and opportunities to benefit from the creative arts and attract visitors from outside of Somerset to visit our beautiful county.

The Octagon Theatre closed at the end of April 2023 for invasive survey works to take place ahead of a planned £29m development of the theatre. Sadly, and just weeks away from construction work due to begin, the project was deemed “unviable” due to inflation impacting borrowing and the construction industry by Somerset Council who had also declared a “financial emergency” at the new unitary

authority. Yeovil Town Council arranged a public meeting on the future of the theatre with members voting to support the development of the Octagon Theatre. Working in partnership with Somerset Council, Yeovil Town Council voted to offer, in principle, capital funding to the development of the Octagon Theatre to secure the venues future for the town and to seek to keep the £10m of government funding for the development. We are pleased to share with you our plans, vision and ambitions for this exciting development that will help to secure the future of the Octagon Theatre for generations to come.

Images from our history - The Octagon Theatre opened as The Johnson Hall in 1974.



*“The Octagon Theatre has played a hugely important role in the life of Yeovil Town for 50 years. Many of our residents have grown up with visits to the Octagon being an important part of their lives and at key milestones through their life from their first visit, trips with school and with family, performing with local groups, graduation and seeing their favourite performers come to the town. The Octagon brings people from the surrounding area into our town, providing an economic boost for our businesses and being a place that bring us together for great entertainment. The town is proud of our Octagon Theatre and it is vital for Yeovil.”*

**Cllr Andy Soughton, Leader of Yeovil Town Council**





# The stage is set...

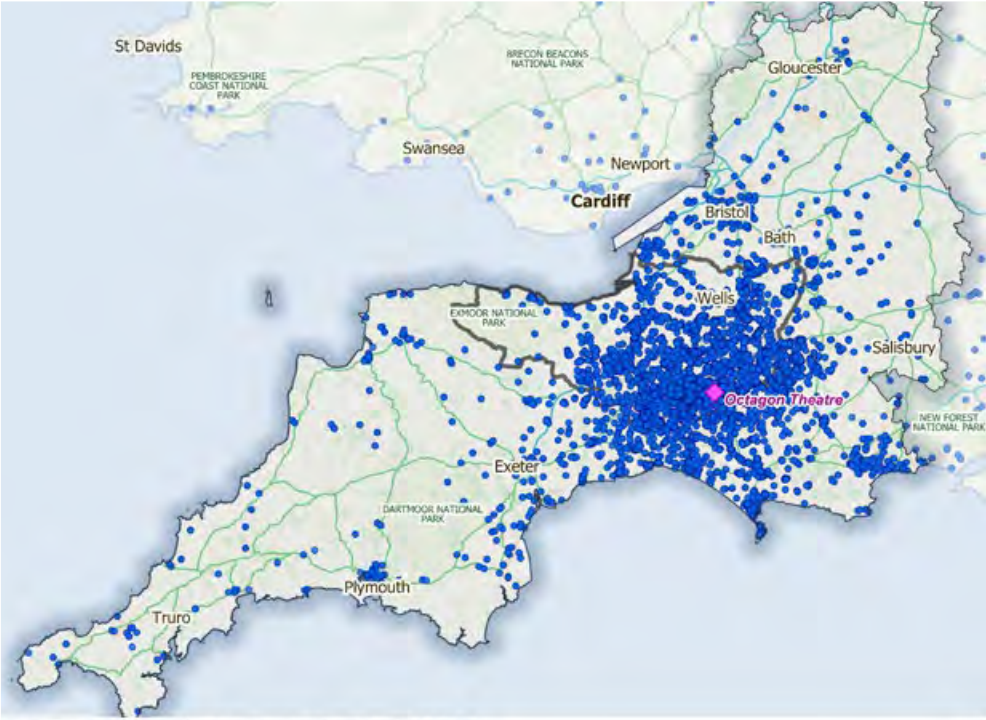
The Octagon Theatre is the largest and principle theatre venue in Somerset having opened in 1974 (then known as The Johnson Hall). Millions of people have been entertained in our theatre and each year we present a diverse range of artists and events, from big name comedians, classical music and opera to rock and folk music, the very best in variety as well as superb plays and ballets, and not forgetting our yearly blockbuster pantomime. The Octagon Theatre plays a significant role in the life of the community, home to a thriving amateur scene, whereby local community groups have become a hub for participation in the creative arts.

Each year around 125,000 people purchase a ticket for an event at the Octagon Theatre, attracting audiences from across the South West and beyond. The Octagon Theatre has been regularly achieving an average of 83% capacity throughout the years with upwards of 250 performances staged annually, significantly above the industry average of 50-60% capacity. In addition, thousands of people take part each month in one of our weekly classes as part of our Octagon Academy participatory programme. As a result, the high usage has taken its toll on the 50-year-old building.

Whilst the front of house areas were extended and seating refurbished in 2003, there is no disabled access backstage for visitors, staff, artists or volunteers and we currently only have one accessible toilet situated front of house. The front of house areas have begun to look tired, dated and often feel cramped. The popular and profitable café bar is hampered by being wrapped around the auditorium with diners' meals interrupted by the arrival of audience members. The kitchen is small and inadequate for the size of the restaurant and the front of house areas lack air conditioning. The popular Octagon Academy classes take place in a small studio obstructed by a supporting pillar in the

middle of the room, with no windows or air cooling and a lack of ceiling height for dance classes. The Octagon Theatre remains one of the most popular theatres in the South West with a loyal and enthusiastic audience, a passionate volunteer base in The Foyer Club and talented team who are devoted to the venue. A feasibility study was commissioned in 2019 to explore how the venue could be developed to address these issues, and to look at the wider Somerset and South West area that the theatre serves and considered what opportunities and needs within the area were not being met.

Yeovil and the wider Somerset deserves a better venue and the Octagon Theatre is well placed geographically to serve the region with the organisation, under the management and support of Yeovil Town Council, having the financial track record and robust plan to develop the theatre for the next 50 years and beyond.



Each dot on the map represents a customer who purchased a ticket for our venues (Octagon Theatre & Westlands Entertainment Venue) between 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024. It does not capture how many tickets they purchased (or information for accompanying guests) or how many times they purchased tickets that year.





*"The arts make life better, and I am passionate that all our residents in Yeovil should have opportunities to experience and take part in them as part of a broad offer of culture, leisure, sports and green spaces. Yeovil Town Council now runs Westlands Entertainment Venue, Yeovil Rec, South Somerset Heritage Collection and Yeovil Country Park. We are proud to provide a range of facilities for our residents to enjoy. The cultural sector contributes billions of pounds a year to the UK economy. It supports local businesses and a wide range of other sectors; from hospitality to retail, transport to tourism. The arts can cultivate our creativity, driving greater innovation and entrepreneurship, driving skills and employment opportunities."*

**Amanda Card**, Chief Executive, Yeovil Town Council





# Curtain up on Somerset’s new flagship cultural centre...

The Octagon Theatre will be developed, refurbished and renewed to secure the theatre for future generations.

**The auditorium** will be refurbished with new seating, carpets and some adjustments to layout whilst maintaining our excellent leg room, comfort, sightlines and intimacy.

**A Participatory Studio** which will become the new home for our popular Octagon Academy and be the perfect place for classes in dance, music, drama, theatre and creative art. A home for our popular choirs, dance and theatre groups, and arts and craft workshops.

**A greatly improved Cafe Bar area** offering food and drink throughout the day for the public and patrons to enjoy and relax. The new entrance to the theatre will create a better first impression and welcome to the theatre.

**Improved front of house and customer facilities** with a large increase in toilet provision with toilets on each level, more accessible toilets, gender neutral toilets and a Changing Places facility for those with additional needs. Accessibility is improved throughout the venue, both front of house and backstage with accessible toilets and showers backstage, and lift access throughout the venue.

**Improvements to the stage house and backstage area** will significantly improve the technical aspects of our productions. Raising the roof will enable us to fly cloths out and a backstage crossover will support the ambitions of our programme and our talented local community groups.

**Enhancements** may go unnoticed but will ensure “the show must go on” making the necessary improvements to secure the future of the Octagon for future generations. This work creates a more sustainable venue, reduces our carbon footprint, ensures staff and guest facilities are up to date and your enjoyment is uninterrupted.



*“Our plans for the Octagon are to create a flagship centre for the creative arts that will provide amazing opportunities for our residents and bring world class artists to Somerset. The plans see the Octagon Theatre transformed into a centre of excellence that will spark economic regeneration for the area and so many opportunities for residents to improve their well-being. The development of the venue will mean less trips out of the county to access brilliant shows, activities and entertainment with superb events right on your doorstep and unleashing creativity across Somerset and beyond.”*

**Adam Burgan-Davies**, Director of Culture, Events and Promotions for Yeovil Town Council, Arts and Entertainment Venues Manager for Somerset Council



Artist impression of the proposed external ground floor entrance to the venue



# A creative spark for change...

As we move forward to raise aspirations and provide residents with a flagship cultural venue that will be the catalyst for a significant renaissance within the county, we will see the theatre attract and bring new artists and companies to Somerset with exciting new opportunities for residents to engage. In recent years the UK has seen an increase in the use of cultural initiatives to address socioeconomic problems, ranging from major capital projects to local participatory initiatives. The use of culture to refresh neighbourhoods, improve the physical environment, offering places to go and things to do, increasing local pride, and building stronger communities has been taking place for many years. Capital projects have shown that cultural buildings and facilities can contribute to the economy as well as the physical, social and cultural regeneration of an area, which in time will attract new and increased investment, creating jobs and opportunities for local people.

Our commitment to create a flagship cultural hub for Somerset has already been a catalyst for change in attracting greater levels of national funding into Somerset. The project has been awarded £10m towards the construction costs from the government Department of Culture Media & Sport (DCMS). The Octagon Theatre was made an Arts Council England (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) in April 2023 with an award of £760,000 over three years to bring the creative arts to our communities. This award sees the development of our Arts Engagement & Outreach department using our venues as creative hubs to deliver work across Somerset working in the areas of:

- **Learning and Participation** for people of all ages and backgrounds to have opportunities to take part, learn and experience the creative arts.
- **Arts for Health & Wellbeing:** Working with NHS trusts and voluntary services, we will develop creative activities that deliver emotional and physical support to people with mental and long-term health conditions.
- **Children and young people** will benefit from programmes and projects in and out of school that will raise their ambitions, support their learning and personal development, gain confidence and new skills through the creative arts.
- **Diversifying our audience** and programme of activity ensuring that events and activities are relevant and reflective of Somersets increasingly diverse communities.
- **Provide opportunities** for everyone to benefit from the creative arts, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who may not have previously been able to access the arts, for whatever reason.
- **Talent development** for artists, practitioners and those working in the creative arts with training, development and networking opportunities.

Our Octagon Theatre team led the consortium bid, on behalf of Somerset Council and Dorset Council to become the Music Hub Lead Organisation for the two counties. The successful bid means the Octagon Music Hub is the lead organisation for music education across the two counties. Our position on the Somerset / Dorset border, passion and expertise for music and arts education is an exciting development that sees us commissioning and partnering with incredible music teachers, practitioners, artists and arts organisations to ensure children and young people across Somerset and Dorset have excellent music education and their lives enriched by the power of music.



*"I am passionate about the arts and the way they can benefit and transform people's lives. Our residents deserve to have the very best in arts and entertainment without having to travel outside of Somerset to do so. The development of a flagship cultural venue has already proven to be a catalyst for change with the Octagon Theatre becoming an Arts Council NPO, Music Hub for Somerset and Dorset and the development will bring benefits across Somerset alongside attracting further national funding and investment into the county. I cannot wait to see how the development will make a significant contribution to improving the lives of our residents."*

**Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts**, Executive Member for Communities, Somerset Council



# A world of entertainment on your doorstep...

What would you like to experience today? The Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue will act as “sister venues” programmed to complement each other and leave you spoilt for choice. How about a brilliant show on the main stage at the Octagon? The latest film on the big screen at Westlands from a comfy sofa? Take part in a class with your choice of singing with a choir, dance, pilates, drama or arts and crafts? Or how about catching up with friends for coffee (and possibly a cake), or finding a quiet corner to curl up with a good book? You will be spoilt for choice when it comes to how to spend your time at our venues.

We have always prided ourselves on the diversity of our programme and we will continue to bring your favourite shows and performers along with the opportunity to discover a wider selection of the best plays, musicals, ballets and artists touring the UK.



*“The Arts Council is pleased to support the Octagon’s redevelopment, a project sure to benefit the residents of Yeovil and communities across Somerset for many years to come. This ambitious capital project will provide audiences with a vibrant new space for entertainment and creativity, along with a tailored programme of family activities and talent opportunities. It’s great to see them already working with publicly funded organisations like Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra to engage children and young people in local schools. Our 10-year strategy, Let’s Create, sets out a vision where everyone can access high-quality arts and culture, whatever their background. This investment is a real step towards making that vision a reality, and I’m excited to see the impact it will have.”*

**Phil Gibby**, South West Area Director, Arts Council England



LIVE MUSIC

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

COMEDY

PLAYS & DRAMA

MUSICALS

DANCE

FAMILY SHOWS

BALLET

PANTOMIME

COMMUNITY &  
AMATEUR SHOWS

SPOKEN WORD  
AND AUDIENCE  
WITH EVENTS

FILM

CLASSES AND  
WORKSHOPS

FESTIVALS



# A stage for world-class artists...

Since the announcement of the capital development, the first major artistic partnership to be announced is with the internationally renowned Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (BSO) that sees the Octagon Theatre become BSO's "home in Somerset" when it reopens. As the Octagon's resident orchestra, local audiences will have access to more symphonic performances by BSO and their world-leading conductors, soloists and talented musicians, alongside a greater number of family-friendly 'BSO On Your Doorstep' chamber-scale concerts, workshops and events.

The partnership will see a regular concert series at the venue from the Orchestra, alongside an exciting and ambitious education and outreach programme designed to bring world-class musical opportunities to residents and visitors of Somerset.

This is the first partnership to be announced. The Octagon Theatre plans to develop a number of creative partnerships with leading arts organisations. These partnerships are intended to create greater opportunities for audiences to have access to, be enriched and inspired by world-class artists here in Somerset.



*"We're thrilled that our partners at the Octagon Theatre share our passion for the empowering impact of live music. We're looking forward to deepening our relationship with communities in Somerset, with even more live concerts from the full Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, plus family-friendly 'BSO On Your Doorstep' chamber-scale concerts, workshops and events. Bringing music into people's lives is why we exist, and we remain committed to reaching people who need our music, now more than ever."*

**Dougie Scarfe OBE**, Chief Executive, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra





# The Auditorium Reimagined...

The enhanced auditorium will retain the Octagon's best features, whilst replacing seats and carpets will improve comfort. Retaining excellent sight lines, generous leg room and air cooling will ensure you can sit back, relax and be ready to be entertained. A well-equipped stage, with improved flying facilities will support a wider range of arts and entertainment events. The improved technical facilities will open up some new companies and events to our programme, from leading theatre companies, classical music and opera, ballet and dance to offering a much-improved experience for existing popular shows and our thriving amateur and community companies. Our Octagon stage will be accessible both front of house and backstage to welcome everyone.



*"I love the Octagon Theatre and it has been a huge part of my life for so many years with countless happy memories spent watching shows, on stage and backstage particular with Castaways Theatre Group. In many ways the Octagon Theatre feels like a "second home". I am so excited to see the transformation of the theatre and the opportunities it will bring for local groups staging their productions at the theatre. I cannot wait!"*

**Lynn Lee Brown**, Director, Castaways Theatre Group



Artist impression of the proposed ground floor lobby area



# Space To Create...

## The Studio

Our popular participatory programme 'The Octagon Academy' will have a new home within our Studio. The Studio is a large fully equipped multi-purpose dance studio, suitable for a variety of classes. The Studio will become a creative hub for dance in the region. Perfect for all dance classes and as a rehearsal space, our Studio will be the place where local dancers of all ages learn new skills, develop their talents and prepare for performances on stage.

The Studio also offers an alternative space for additional classes and rehearsals including our popular choir, theatre groups and arts and craft workshops. Our participatory programme brings communities together in forging new friendships and improving the health and wellbeing of local residents. They are also key to our engagement programme where workshops can be delivered by the companies performing in the main auditorium.



Artists impression of the Octagon Dance studio area



*"I believe passionately that dance is for everyone and everybody. Whether it is for fun, for exercise, at a social event, professionally or simply to feel the joy of dance and movement – dance is essential. I've been lucky to perform at the Octagon countless times and I know the important role theatres like the Octagon play for all young people wishing to embark on a career in the creative arts. Having a purpose-built dance studio will make a significant development to the opportunities for people of all ages and be a place of joy for so many."*

**James Bamford**, Director, Project Dance





# Be Our Guest...

## Front Of House & Other Facilities

Front of house will offer attractive foyers for use throughout the day with excellent supporting bars and eating opportunities. Customers will enter on the first floor, level with Petters Way Car Park, with no need to use the sloped path or steps. The front of house areas will have accessible toilets on every level and an adult changing facility. There is also an increase in toilet provision meaning less time spent in the queue during the interval and more time to enjoy an ice cream or refreshing drink!

On the first floor, directly in front of the main entrance and at the 'heart' of the new venue will be our relaxed and cosy café bar. Open throughout the day, this will be the perfect place to meet friends and family whether you are attending a performance, a class, or just finding a quiet corner to read your book.

Our new venue will be accessible to everyone, addressing and resolving the current access inadequacies and transforming the venue to offer a warm welcome to everyone with improved facilities for those with physical disabilities including visual and audio impairments. The development will give the opportunity to architecturally mark the gateway to Yeovil Country Park and create a more attractive building that is sympathetic to the surrounding area.



Artists impression of the proposed Café Bar area



*"I see every day the power of the creative arts to transform people's lives and improve their health and well-being. Seeing a performance, taking part in a workshop or attending creative classes bring huge benefits for everyone to lead healthy lives or support recovery from illness. The development of the Octagon Theatre and the associated investment from Arts Council brings huge opportunities to support the health and well-being of residents in Somerset and working together we can support the work of the NHS and clinical commissioning groups with innovative projects"*

**Caroline Barnes**, Creative Health Coordinator,  
Somerset NHS Foundation Trust





# Funding The Project...

The total project is budgeted to cost £15m which includes contingency and allowances for inflation. The project is being managed by Somerset Council who will deliver the project and upon completion, the Octagon Theatre will be transferred to Yeovil Town Council who will operate the theatre as a 'sister' venue to Westlands Entertainment Venue (already operated by Yeovil Town Council).

Fundraising can also be fun! Castaways Theatre Group joined some of our staff for a sponsored 24- hour sleepover at the venue and we welcomed comedian, ventriloquist and winner of America's Got Talent! Paul Zerdin for a performance, with all ticket proceeds being donated to our Name A Seat campaign. Paul is a patron of our Name A Seat initiative and all money from the campaign is going towards the development of the theatre.

You too can get involved with our 'Name A Seat' campaign. From £150, you can have a personalised plaque on a seat within our new auditorium. Contributing now means that you will be placed on our priority list and contacted to choose a seat for your plaque once the seating plan has been designed.

The development of the Octagon Theatre will provide an economic boost for Yeovil and the surrounding area. On reopening the Octagon will generate £9m of economic activity annually and support 160 jobs throughout the economy.

Whilst the economic basis for development is compelling, this project is also about improving the health and wellbeing of everyone living within our county and beyond. We passionately believe that everyone should have access to the arts and that they have the ability to transform people's lives.



You can support our work and the redevelopment of the theatre by making a donation to help the arts thrive in Somerset. Scan our QR code and make a donation online.

Government Funding (DCMS)	£10,000,000
Yeovil Town Council	£3,750,000*
Ticket Levy - Existing funding generated by users of The Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue	£541,000
Fundraising and other grants	£444,000
Somerset Council	£265,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£15,000,000</b>

*\*funding from Yeovil Town Council is proposed to be a combination of funding from reserves and borrowing, a proportion of which would be repaid via the Ticket Levy. This funding is subject to a public consultation with Yeovil Town Council residents.*



*"The development will enable more opportunities for employment and have a significant impact on the local economy. Increasing the size and revamping the dance studio will enable students to better learn from their Academy Class teachers and create a better environment for all. The building itself will be transformed, including backstage, to remove physical barriers for disabled people or those with mobility needs. I am excited by the development of the programme of performances and activity that promises to showcase and appeal to many different communities."*

**Chhavi Gautam**, Octagon Academy Bollywood Dance Instructor



Artists impression of the Octagon Theatre lobby



# Current Timeline...

The design project team has been led by experienced theatre architects, Burrell Foley Fischer and we have completed Stage 2 RIBA designs.

**April 2023**

The Octagon Theatre was “put to sleep” with a special performance from local dancer Davina Derrick from Helen Laxton Dance Company, as the finale to our big community celebration “SHiNE”. Work was then undertaken to clear the theatre of all the equipment, furniture and fittings along with more invasive survey work.

**October 2023**

Somerset Council declares a “financial emergency” and proposals to develop the Octagon Theatre are deemed unviable due to increased interest rates and inflation impacting the construction sector.

**November 2023**

Yeovil Town Council offers to work in partnership with Somerset Council to secure the future of the Octagon Theatre with members voting in principle to provide a financial grant of £3.75m.

**2024**

Through 2024 Somerset Council (against the backdrop of a financial emergency) and Yeovil Town Council work in partnership with Arts Council England and DCMS to establish a new scope for development of the Octagon Theatre. Procurement exercises take place to appoint a new design team, Project Managers and Cost Consultants.

Burrell Foley Fisher are appointed to lead the architect-led design team.

Working with the Octagon team, the scope for the development is completed exploring what can be achieved with the finances available.

**2025**

June RIBA 2 (Concept Design) has been completed and approved by both authorities.

Yeovil Town Council will undertake consultation with residents of Yeovil Town on funding for the Octagon development.

RIBA 3 (Spatial Coordination) begins with more technical drawings and a deeper level of detail and information. This stage will be completed in October 2025 and planning permission will be submitted.

**2026**

Planning Permission is secured.

RIBA 4 (Technical Design) is undertaken and completed.

A contractor is appointed and mobilised with building work starting towards the end of the year.

**2027/28**

Construction work will take place and the development of the Octagon takes place with key construction milestones.

**2028/29**

Construction work is completed and the building is decorated, with furniture and equipment installed. There is a period of commissioning, snagging and training as staff move back into the theatre, which is currently anticipated to reopen in winter.



Artists impression of the Octagon Theatre lobby



# Questions

**Could the money be spent on something else?**

The £10m of government funding was allocated specifically to the development of the Octagon Theatre. There are a number of approval gateways to be met before the funding is confirmed and released prior to construction. If the funding were to be withdrawn or the development were not to go ahead and the funding was declined, it would return to the treasury and could not be allocated to another project in Yeovil or Somerset. The grant of £3.75m from Yeovil Town Council would be made specifically for the Octagon a portion of this funding will also be repaid by users of the theatre via the ticket levy. Other fundraising was given specifically for the development of the Octagon Theatre and cannot be used for other projects.

**Why can't you reopen the Octagon until building works start?**

When the Octagon was closed all equipment was taken out of the theatre and invasive survey works took place. There would be significant costs and work needed to make repairs and get the theatre ready to operate once more. Programming for shows and tours takes place 6-18 months in advance. The number of staff working across both venues was also reduced and it would take time to recruit and train staff. Development of the Octagon Theatre would see the theatre close again in 2026.

**Why not just leave the Octagon as it was? Does it really need development?**

We all miss the Octagon Theatre very much. The theatre is 50 years old and was not originally built as a theatre. There are a number of issues with the theatre in its current form; access backstage is very poor, access front of house is poor, there is a lack of toilet provision, the theatre is dated, tired and in need of development. While we all want to see the Octagon back open, we believe the chance to develop the theatre and secure its long-term future is worth the wait. We are also unlikely to see £10m of national funding for the Octagon again in our lifetime and believe it would be a shame to miss out on this opportunity.

**Is there a risk the project will overrun on time and budget?**

Large scale capital projects are complicated and we were very disappointed that the previous scheme was not able to be delivered. We have therefore built greater levels of contingency into the project in terms of budget and timescales. The project is being carefully managed and all of the partners involved have their own processes for managing risk, scrutiny, accountability and ensuring value for money for public funding. The team are focussed on delivering the very best outcome and seeing the Octagon back open and developed and secured for future generations.



**What will happen to the Octagon if Yeovil Town residents do not support the project or the project does not go ahead?**

The development project would not be viable without the funding from Yeovil Town Council (unless another funder were to come forward). It is likely that the £10m from government would therefore not be awarded and the theatre would remain closed.



The creation of a Flagship Cultural Hub for Somerset has been many years in the making so we would like to thank everyone who has supported our journey so far and helped us to reach this exciting moment. You can follow the progress of the project at our website [octagon-theatre.co.uk](http://octagon-theatre.co.uk)



*“Our officers, members and project team are working incredibly hard to create a flagship cultural venue that the whole of Somerset can be proud of and that will bring so much joy to our residents and countless benefits. It is one of the most significant projects and investments being made by Somerset Council and I look forward to seeing the transformational effects this project will bring for the communities we serve.”*

**Cllr Mike Best**, Chairman, Somerset Council and Octagon Project Board



**Contact Us...**

We invite you to be part of the conversation and thank you for taking the time to read this information. We hope you found it interesting, exciting and helpful. You can contact us in the following ways:

**Email us:**  
[octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk](mailto:octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk)

**Write to us:**  
The Octagon Theatre, Hendford, Yeovil,  
Somerset BA20 1UX

- Engage with us via social media:**
-  /TheOctagonTheatre
  -  @OctagonYeovil
  -  @OctagonYeovil
  -  @OctagonYeovil

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Artists impression of the Octagon Theatre lobby area





**Somerset**  
Council



**Yeovil Town Council**



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[www.octagon-theatre.co.uk](http://www.octagon-theatre.co.uk)

# OCTAGON THEATRE CONSULTATION FAQS



## **Why can't residents who live in neighbouring parishes respond?**

The loan would be taken out by Yeovil Town Council. Yeovil Town Council do not have the power to raise the precept of other councils. Only the electorate in the parish of Yeovil are being consulted because any increase in Council Tax by Yeovil Town Council, due to the Octagon project, will not affect residents who do not live within that particular parish.

## **What is the PWLB?**

PWLB stands for Public Works Loan Board. It is a UK government body that historically provides loans to local authorities for capital projects. Though the statutory board was abolished in 2020, its functions continue under HM Treasury and are administered by the UK Debt Management Office (DMO).

There is a process that the Council needs to follow. The questions asked are prescribed by the PWLB. The PWLB will also take into account how we have consulted with residents and we are pleased we have received very positive feedback on our approach to ensure all residents are being contacted and given the opportunity to take part in the consultation.

## **What if the interest rate increases?**

If the council do borrow, it will be at a fixed rate so if interest rates do increase, there will be no fluctuations in the amounts repayable for the period of the loan (20 years).

This means that the annual repayments will remain the same which is better for budgeting purposes.

## **What does the stamp duty relate to?**

Unfortunately, Councils are not exempt from taxes and duties set by HMRC. Upon completion of the project the Octagon Theatre will transfer to Yeovil Town Council. HMRC will view that the £3.75 million contributed to the project is not freely given,

and therefore subject to stamp duty. Advice is being sought, about how this can be challenged.

### **Have any contributions been secured from other parish councils?**

Contributions have not been secured from other parish councils. Yeovil Town Council have received contributions from Yeovil Without Parish Council and East Coker Parish Council for the wider devolution of services

### **What are the benefits of the project?**

- The Octagon Theatre will be developed, refurbished and renewed to secure the theatre for future generations.
- The auditorium will be refurbished with new seating, carpets and some adjustments to layout whilst maintaining excellent leg room, comfort, sightlines and intimacy.
- A Participatory Studio which will become the new home for the Octagon Academy and be the perfect place for classes in dance, music, drama, theatre and creative art. A home for our popular choirs, dance and theatre groups, and arts and craft workshops.
- A greatly improved Cafe Bar area offering food and drink throughout the day for the public and patrons to enjoy and relax.
- Improved front of house and customer facilities with a large increase in toilet provision with toilets on each level, more accessible toilets and a Changing Places facility for those with additional needs.
- Accessibility is improved throughout the venue, both front of house and backstage with accessible toilets and showers backstage, and lift access throughout the venue.
- Improvements to the stage house and backstage area will significantly improve the technical aspects of productions. Raising the roof will enable the use of fly cloths and a backstage crossover will support the ambitions of the programme and talented local community groups.

This work creates a more sustainable venue, reduces our carbon footprint, ensures staff and guest facilities are up to date and your enjoyment is uninterrupted.

### **What is the contingency plan if the project goes over budget?**

The project is being led by Somerset Council and incorporates substantial contingency provisions at every stage. While it is impossible to predict every future scenario, significant contingencies have been included, and the project is being rigorously monitored and managed. The Project Team consists of highly experienced

professionals with a proven track record of delivering complex, high-profile projects. Should forecasts indicate a potential overspend, the team is required to apply its expertise to bring the project back within budget while maintaining the agreed outcomes. Ongoing management also includes regular market testing to ensure value and competitiveness.

We have strengthened our approach by incorporating higher levels of contingency into both the budget and the project timeline. The project is subject to robust governance, with all partners operating established processes for risk management, scrutiny, accountability, and ensuring value for public funds.

Our priority is to deliver the best possible outcome, reopening and enhancing The Octagon Theatre as a long-term community asset for future generations. The overall project budget includes strong contingency measures, and responsibility for remaining within budget will rest with the appointed contractor, the Project Team, and the Project Board. The contractor's appointment will be governed by a comprehensive contract that includes clauses designed to manage these obligations effectively.

### **What level of subsidy will the Octagon be receiving?**

The Octagon Theatre has historically received a subsidy to support its operation, which is consistent with other theatres of a similar size and scope.

The subsidy has always been provided on the basis that the theatre operates as a community asset—serving and benefiting local residents. This approach ensures that local amateur and community groups can hire the venue at subsidised rates, enabling them to stage productions that would otherwise be difficult to present locally. As a result, the theatre has been able to deliver a diverse and inclusive programme, including classical music, drama, opera, dance, ballet, and other cultural experiences that residents might otherwise have to travel outside the area to access.

Additionally, the theatre has offered concessions and discounted tickets for lower-income groups, including senior citizens, children, students, those who are unemployed, and individuals with disabilities. The subsidy has also enabled The Octagon to attract additional external funding, such as lottery grants and government support via organisations like Arts Council England.

Many of our services operate under similar principles, requiring subsidies to deliver community-focused outcomes—for example, Yeovil Country Park, South Somerset Heritage Collection, and Yeovil Recreation Centre. We also provide grants to local organisations to help sustain their work. These subsidies do not indicate inefficiency or poor management; rather, they reflect our commitment to delivering high-quality services for the benefit of the community.



Yeovil Town Council has already factored a level of subsidy into the council tax of £209,470 to ensure The Octagon Theatre continues to operate in the interests of residents. Our aim is to manage the theatre efficiently, providing value for money while reducing the subsidy compared to previous years. Should members wish to pursue a more commercially driven operating model, the service can be instructed to adjust its approach accordingly.

## **How is the tax base calculated?**

The council tax base is the measure of the number of chargeable domestic properties in a local authority's area, expressed as an equivalent number of band D dwellings. The Billing Authority (Somerset Council) provides the Town Council with this figure.

Every domestic property in England is assigned to a council tax band (A to H) on its value. Each band is given a ratio compared to Band D.

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H	Total
Number of dwellings per band	3,619	5,976	2,869	1,177	679	218	69	7	14,614
Ratio to band D	6/9	7/9	8/9	9/9	11/9	13/9	15/9	18/9	
<b>Equivalent Band D</b>	<b>2,412.67</b>	<b>4,648.00</b>	<b>2,550.22</b>	<b>1,177.00</b>	<b>829.89</b>	<b>314.89</b>	<b>115.00</b>	<b>14.00</b>	<b>12,061.67</b>

The council tax base is calculated by adjusting all properties to their band equivalent and factoring in discounts, exemptions, and projected collection rates. Yeovil Town Council's band D equivalent has been adjusted by 2,569.50. The tax base for Yeovil Town Council is 9,492,17.

## **Could the money be spent on something else?**

The £10m of government funding was allocated specifically to the development of the Octagon Theatre. There are several approval gateways to be met before the funding is confirmed and released prior to construction. If the funding were to be withdrawn or the development were not to go ahead and the funding was declined, it would return to the treasury and could not be allocated to another project in Yeovil or Somerset. The grant of £3.75m from Yeovil Town Council would be made specifically for the Octagon a portion of this funding will also be repaid by users of the theatre via the ticket levy. Other fundraising was given specifically for the development of the Octagon Theatre and cannot be used for other projects.

## **What will happen to The Octagon if Yeovil Town residents do not support the project or the project does not go ahead?**

The development project would not be viable without the funding from Yeovil Town Council (unless another funder were to come forward). It is likely that the £10m from government would therefore not be awarded and the theatre would remain closed.

### **Why can't you reopen the Octagon until building works start?**

When the Octagon was closed all equipment was taken out of the theatre and invasive survey works took place. There would be significant costs and work needed to make repairs and get the theatre ready to operate once more. Programming for shows and tours takes place 6-18 months in advance. The number of staff working across both venues was also reduced and it would take time to recruit and train staff. Development of the Octagon Theatre would see the theatre close again in 2026.

### **Why not just leave the Octagon as it was? Does it really need development?**

We all miss the Octagon Theatre very much. The theatre is 50 years old and was not originally built as a theatre. There are several issues with the theatre in its current form; access backstage is very poor, access front of house is poor, there is a lack of toilet provision, the theatre is dated, tired and in need of development. While we all want to see the Octagon back open, we believe the chance to develop the theatre and secure its long-term future is worth the wait. We are also unlikely to see £10m of national funding for the Octagon again in our lifetime and believe it would be a shame to miss out on this opportunity.

### **Could you develop a smaller/cheaper scheme?**

The Octagon Theatre project is being led by Somerset Council, and the theatre currently remains under their ownership. Working in partnership with Yeovil Town Council, the project team have developed these proposals seeking to respond to historical issues with the building and ensure the theatres success for future generations. We believe the £3.75m offered, in principle, by Yeovil Town Council (as voted on by members) has meant that the grant of £10m from government has remained in place. If we now seek a different proposal, it is likely this funding will be lost and any investment we do make will result in a far smaller refurbishment that is likely to mean most of the issues will remain with the building.

### **What is the economic benefit to the town?**

The development and reopening of The Octagon Theatre is expected to generate £9m per year for the local economy. It will create jobs and support our town centre business particularly hotels, restaurants, shops, the wider hospitality sector and attract visitors and businesses to the town. The theatre, and activity at the theatre, also raises tens of thousands of pounds every year for local charities. Culture is often used as a successful way to regenerate towns, improving health and well-being and being a source of education and raising aspirations.

## **Why should I pay for it? I don't use it or can't afford to go.**

We believe theatre is for everyone. The Octagon Theatre offers an accessible pricing scheme offering heavily discounted or free tickets to ensure the theatre is affordable for all. The same scheme is also offered for The Octagon Academy participatory classes. As a regional theatre the programme of events at The Octagon has always strived to offer "something for everyone" and we are committed to broadening our programme.

## **What happens next?**

There is a process that needs to be followed. Yeovil Town Council will collate the responses and use the results to support the application to borrow £3.325 million. Before sending to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government for Secretary of State Approval, the application will be sent to Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC). SALC will check that the application has been completed correctly; that the relevant criteria has been met; and that the form is accompanied with other mandatory documentation.





# Yeovil Town Council

Town House  
19 Union Street  
Yeovil  
Somerset  
BA20 1PQ

Website : [www.yeovil.gov.uk](http://www.yeovil.gov.uk)

Amanda Card Chief Executive / Town Clerk

Resident of the parish of Yeovil Town  
Address

Date: August 2025  
Your Ref:  
Our Ref:  
Ask for:  
E-mail: octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk

Dear resident of the parish of Yeovil Town

## **The Octagon Theatre Development and Reopening**

We are writing to you to update you and consult on the proposal for Yeovil Town Council to financially contribute to the development and reopening of the Octagon Theatre

In October 2023, Somerset Council declared their plans to develop the Octagon Theatre unviable due to their “financial emergency” and increases in interest and inflation that impacted the cost of borrowing and construction. In response to this announcement, on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023, Yeovil Town Council held an emergency meeting at Westlands Entertainment Venue which was attended by around 400 members of the public. At this meeting, Yeovil Town Council voted to work in partnership with Somerset Council and offer support to see The Octagon Theatre developed and reopened.

Having reached a milestone in the project completing the concept design stage, we are now in a position to share the plans to develop the theatre. We hope that you will find the information enclosed of interest, helping you to understand the project and reach your decision on whether you support the proposals put forward.

## **This is your opportunity to ensure that the new and improved Octagon Theatre re-opens.**

We believe that the Octagon Theatre is vital part of the cultural and leisure offering of our town, benefiting our residents, attracting visitors and supporting the economic prosperity of Yeovil. Once completed, the Octagon Theatre will be transferred to Yeovil Town Council who will manage the theatre.

Yeovil is made up of various different parishes and you are being written to as a resident of the parish of Yeovil Town. Some of your friends, family and neighbours may live in a different parish of Yeovil and will therefore not receive this information or be part of this consultation.

The total project budget is £15 million, which includes £10 million of government funding. We are proposing to invest £3.75 million to secure the £10 million from government and would be required to pay stamp duty of £214,500 to transfer The Octagon Theatre to Yeovil Town Council. This means a total financial commitment of £3,964,500. This will be funded with £639,500 reserves and borrowing of £3.325 million from the Public Works Loan Board.

To borrow £3.325 million over a period of 20 years at a rate in the region of 5.8%, there will be an annual repayment of about £283,063, which will repay both principal and interest. The annual repayment will be funded by £173,000 of ticket levy (paid by users of the service) and remaining £110,063 by increasing the precept by 3.3%.

This equates to an increase of £11.60 per year for a Band D property (or 22 pence per week) for a 20-year period. It is important to note that 85.3% of dwellings in the parish of Yeovil are below a Band D.

**The impact on the various Council tax bands is indicated in the table below:**

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
<b>Increase per year</b>	<b>7.73</b>	<b>9.02</b>	<b>10.31</b>	<b>11.60</b>	<b>14.18</b>	<b>16.76</b>	<b>19.33</b>	<b>23.20</b>
<b>Increase per week</b>	<b>0.15</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.20</b>	<b>0.22</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>0.32</b>	<b>0.37</b>	<b>0.44</b>

You can keep up to date with the project and find further information at <https://www.yeovil.gov.uk/octagon-theatre>. Please complete the form overleaf to take part in the consultation or complete the online form found on the website by scanning the QR code at the bottom of this letter. We are also organising some Open Events, more details will also be available on our website, or you can also contact your local councilor to discuss the project details of which can be found at <https://www.yeovil.gov.uk/meet-your-councillors>.

There will be a separate period of public consultation as part of the planning process that will focus on the design proposals later in the year.

Yours faithfully



Cllr Andy Soughton  
**Leader of Yeovil Town Council**



Cllr Graham Oakes  
**Chair of Culture, Events & Promotions**

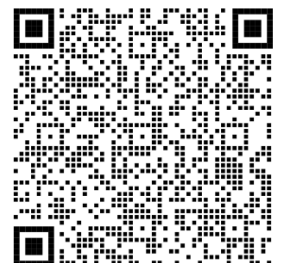
**Chair of Finance & Policy Executive**



Amanda Card  
**Chief Executive / Town Clerk**



Adam Burgan  
**Director of Culture, Events & Promotions**





## YEOVIL TOWN COUNCIL

### CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE OCTAGON THEATRE PROJECT

- Are you in **FAVOUR** of Yeovil Town Council going ahead with the contribution of £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the Octagon Theatre Project resulting in borrowing of £3,325,000?

YES ☐ NO ☐ (please tick appropriate box)

- Are you in **FAVOUR** of Yeovil Town Council going ahead with the contribution of £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the Octagon Theatre Project resulting in borrowing of £3,325,000, if it includes a Council tax precept increase of 3.3% (equivalent to £110,062.69) for the purpose of the loan repayments?

YES ☐ NO ☐ (please tick appropriate box)

Name	
Address	
Signed	
Date	

Please send this survey questionnaire to Yeovil Town Council at the address below by:  
**21<sup>st</sup> September 2025**

Yeovil Town Council  
Town House  
19 Union Street  
Yeovil  
Somerset  
BA20 1PQ  
e-mail : [octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk](mailto:octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk)

You may return the questionnaire to any of the following locations:

- Westlands Entertainment Venue (Box Office)
- Yeovil Country Park (Ninesprings Café)
- Yeovil Recreation Centre (The Rec Café)

Alternatively, why not complete the online form by scanning the QR code?



# YOUR CHANCE TO REOPEN THE OCTAGON THEATRE



Yeovil Town Council

 **OCTAGON**  
THEATRE

[www.octagon-theatre.co.uk](http://www.octagon-theatre.co.uk)

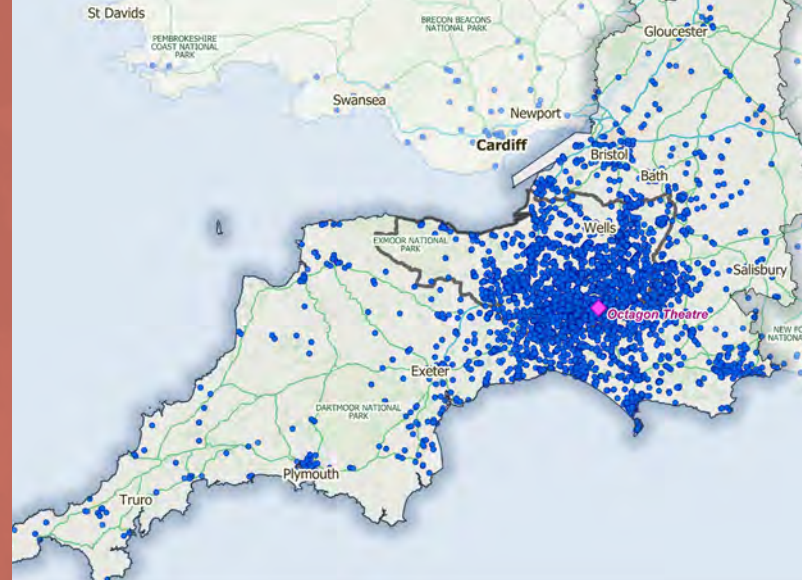


# THE NEED FOR INVESTMENT

We are delighted to share with you redevelopment plans for the Octagon Theatre that will see the current building reopened and transformed into a flagship venue for the arts and entertainment. The Octagon Theatre closed at the end of April 2023 for survey works to take place ahead of a planned development of the theatre. Sadly, and just weeks away from construction work due to begin, the project was deemed “unviable” due to inflation impacting borrowing and the construction industry by Somerset Council who had also declared a “financial emergency”.

Yeovil Town Council arranged a public meeting on the future of the theatre with members voting to support the development of the Octagon Theatre.

Working in partnership with Somerset Council, Yeovil Town Council voted to offer, in principle, capital funding to the development of the Octagon Theatre to secure the venues future for the town and to seek to keep the £10m of government funding for the development. Over the last year a number of milestones in the development of the venue have taken place and we are pleased to share with you our plans for this exciting development. The plans will secure the future of the Octagon Theatre for generations to come.



*Each dot on the map represents a customer who purchased a ticket for our venues (Octagon Theatre & Westlands Entertainment Venue) between between 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024. It does not capture how many tickets they purchased (or information for accompanying guests) or how many times they purchased tickets that year.*

The Octagon Theatre is the largest and principle theatre in Somerset having opened in 1974 (known as The Johnson Hall). Millions of people have been entertained in our theatre and each year we present a diverse programme of artists and events, from big name comedians, classical music, as well as superb plays and ballets, and our yearly blockbuster pantomime. The theatre is home to a thriving amateur scene, and each year around 125,000 people purchase a ticket for an event, attracting audiences from across the South West and beyond.

While much loved, the Octagon Theatre has long been in need of investment to address access issues throughout the building but particularly affecting the backstage area which has remained relatively untouched since the 1970s. The auditorium needs refurbishing and

improved technical facilities would support bigger productions. The front of house areas are in need of refurbishment and additional toilets, while the studio is hampered by a pillar in the middle of the room. The theatre seeks to improve catering facilities and upgrade outdated building services.

The Octagon Theatre is well placed geographically to serve the region with the organisation, under the management and support of Yeovil Town Council, having the financial track record and robust plan to develop the theatre for the next 50 years and beyond.

Image from our history - the Octagon Theatre opened as The Johnson Hall in 1974.





# CURTAIN UP ON TOP-NOTCH ENTERTAINMENT ON YOUR DOORSTEP!

Our proposals see the Octagon Theatre developed, refurbished and renewed to secure the theatre for future generations.

- The auditorium will be refurbished with new seating, carpets, maintaining our excellent leg room, comfort and sightlines
- A new studio will be the perfect place for classes in dance, music, drama and theatre, and creative art. A home for our popular choirs, dance and theatre groups, and arts and craft workshops.
- A greatly improved café bar area open throughout the day for the public and patrons to enjoy and relax.
- Improved front of house and customer facilities with a large increase in toilet provision with toilets on each level, more accessible toilets, gender neutral toilets and a Changing Places facility.

- Accessibility is improved throughout the venue, both front of house and backstage.
- Improvements to the stage house and backstage area will significantly improve the technical aspects of our productions.
- The Octagon Theatre would become The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's "home in Somerset".
- The proposals create a "flagship cultural hub for Somerset" with investment of £10m from government on the building project and ongoing investment through Arts Council England for our Arts Engagement & Outreach programme and The Octagon Music Hub Lead Organisation for music education in Somerset and Dorset.



Artist impression of the proposed Octagon Café



Artist impression of the proposed Octagon Dance Studio





# FUNDING THE PROJECT

The total project budget is £15m, that includes contingency and allowances for inflation, with funding made up of:

Government Funding (DCMS)	£10,000,000
Yeovil Town Council	£3,750,000*
Ticket Levy - Existing funding generated by users of the Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue	£541,000
Fundraising and other grants	£444,000
Somerset Council	£265,000

**Total** **£15,000,000**

*\*funding from Yeovil Town Council is proposed to be a combination of funding from reserves and borrowing, a proportion of which would be repaid via the Ticket Levy. This funding is subject to a public consultation with Yeovil Town Council residents.*

The project is being managed by Somerset Council who will deliver the project and upon completion, the Octagon Theatre will be transferred to Yeovil Town Council who will operate the theatre as a 'sister' venue to Westlands Entertainment Venue (already operated by Yeovil Town Council).

Artist impression of the proposed Octagon Theatre entrance



The development of the Octagon Theatre will provide an economic boost for Yeovil and the surrounding area. Creating jobs and supporting the local economy and town centre. Whilst the economic basis for development is compelling, this project is also about improving the health and wellbeing of everyone living within our county and beyond.

### Timescale

**2025** - Structural plans have been completed and approved. We will now move into more detailed design work. Yeovil Town Council will undertake consultation with residents on whether they wish to support

the project and see the theatre reopened. Planning permission will be submitted towards the end of the year.

**2026** - The designs are finalised and a contractor is appointed with construction commencing.

**2027/28** - Construction works take place with key milestones throughout the year.

**2028/29** - Construction work is completed and the building is decorated and furniture and equipment installed. There is a period of commissioning, snagging and training as staff move back into the Octagon Theatre and reopen the theatre.



Artist impression of the proposed Octagon Theatre lobby



# QUESTIONS:

## Could the money be spent on something else?

The £10m of government funding was allocated specifically to the development of the Octagon Theatre. If the funding were to be withdrawn or the development were not to go ahead it would return to the treasury and could not be allocated to another project in Yeovil or Somerset.

## Why can't you reopen The Octagon until building works start?

When The Octagon was closed all equipment was taken out of the theatre and invasive survey works took place. There would be significant costs and work needed to make repairs and get the theatre ready to operate along with the recruitment and training of staff and volunteers to operate. Programming for shows and tours takes place 6-18 months in advance. Development of the Octagon Theatre would see the theatre close again in 2026

## Why not just leave The Octagon as it was? Does it really need development?

The theatre is 50 years old and was not originally built as a theatre. There are a number of issues with the theatre in its current form; access backstage is very poor, access front of house is poor, there is a lack of toilet provision, the theatre is dated, tired and in need of development. The Octagon Theatre is in need of development to secure its long-term future. The £10m of government funding is a rare opportunity.

## What will happen to The Octagon if Yeovil Town residents do not support the project or the project does not go ahead?

The development project would not be viable without the funding from Yeovil Town Council (unless another funder were to come forward). It is likely that the £10m from government would therefore not be awarded and the theatre would remain closed.

## How can I get involved?

Yeovil Town Council will be consulting directly with residents in the summer of 2025. Wider public consultation will take place as part of the planning process later in 2025. Details of fundraising opportunities including "Name A Seat" are available on the Octagon website or at Westlands Entertainment Venue.

The creation of a Flagship Cultural Hub for Somerset has been many years in the making so we would like to thank everyone who has supported our journey so far and helped us to reach this exciting moment. You can follow the progress of the project at our website [octagon-theatre.co.uk](http://octagon-theatre.co.uk)

### Email us:

[octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk](mailto:octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk)

### Write to us:

The Octagon Theatre, Hendford, Yeovil, Somerset BA20 1UX

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Credit and our thanks to Len Copland who has supplied many of the photos taken in this document.



# Yeovil Town Council

Town House  
19 Union Street  
Yeovil  
Somerset  
BA20 1PQ

Website : [www.yeovil.gov.uk](http://www.yeovil.gov.uk)

Amanda Card Chief Executive / Town Clerk

Date: September 2025  
E-mail: [octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk](mailto:octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk)

Dear elector(s) of the parish of Yeovil Town

## **The Octagon Theatre Development and Reopening – there is still time to have your say to ensure that the new and improved Octagon Theatre re-opens.**

We wrote to you a couple of weeks ago to update you and consult on the proposal for Yeovil Town Council to financially contribute to the development and reopening of the Octagon Theatre.

The Octagon Theatre is vital part of Yeovil's cultural and leisure offering. It benefits our residents, attracts visitors and supports the town's economic prosperity. Once the redevelopment is complete, the theatre will be transferred to Yeovil Town Council for ongoing management.

The total project budget is £15 million, including £10 million of government funding. We are proposing to invest £3.75 million to secure the £10 million from government and there is a requirement to pay stamp duty of £214,500 on transfer. This means a total financial commitment of £3,964,500. This will be funded by £639,500 reserves and borrowing of £3.325 million from the Public Works Loan Board.

To borrow £3.325 million over a period of 20 years at an estimated interest rate of 5.8%, the annual repayment will be approximately £283,063 (covering principal and interest). Funding for these repayments will come from: ticket levy (paid by theatre users): £173,000 annually and precept increase: £110,063 annually (equivalent to a 3.3% increase).

### **The impact on Council tax bands over the 20-year period is outlined in the table below:**

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
<b>Increase per year</b>	<b>7.73</b>	<b>9.02</b>	<b>10.31</b>	<b>11.60</b>	<b>14.18</b>	<b>16.76</b>	<b>19.33</b>	<b>23.20</b>
<b>Increase per week</b>	<b>0.15</b>	<b>0.17</b>	<b>0.20</b>	<b>0.22</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>0.32</b>	<b>0.37</b>	<b>0.44</b>

*(Note: 85.3% of dwellings in the parish of Yeovil fall below a Band D.)*

### **Each member of your household who is on the electoral register can take part in the consultation.**

You can participate by:

- Completing the form and returning it as instructed, or
- Completing the online form by scanning the QR code on the form

Additional forms are available by emailing [Octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk](mailto:Octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk), or can be downloaded at [www.yeovil.gov.uk/octagon-theatre](http://www.yeovil.gov.uk/octagon-theatre), where project updates are also posted. If you require this letter in a different language or Large Print please contact us and we will arrange for an alternative copy.

If there is insufficient support for this borrowing proposal, the Octagon Theatre project cannot proceed, and the £10 million government funding may be withdrawn.

Yours faithfully

**Yeovil Town Council**

# YEOVIL TOWN COUNCIL



## CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE OCTAGON THEATRE PROJECT

Each member of your household who is on the electoral register can take part in the consultation. If you have already responded, you do not need to respond again.

- Are you in **FAVOUR** of Yeovil Town Council going ahead with the contribution of £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the Octagon Theatre Project resulting in borrowing of £3,325,000?

YES ☐ NO ☐ (please tick appropriate box)

- Are you in **FAVOUR** of Yeovil Town Council going ahead with the contribution of £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the Octagon Theatre Project resulting in borrowing of £3,325,000, if it includes a Council tax precept increase of 3.3% (equivalent to £110,062.69) for the purpose of the loan repayments?

YES ☐ NO ☐ (please tick appropriate box)

Name	
Address	
Signed	
Date	

Please send your response to Yeovil Town Council at the address below by: **21<sup>st</sup> September 2025**

Yeovil Town Council  
Town House  
19 Union Street  
YEOVIL  
BA20 1PQ  
e-mail : [octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk](mailto:octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk)



You may return the questionnaire to any of the following locations:

- Westlands Entertainment Venue (Box Office)
- Yeovil Country Park (Ninesprings Café)
- Yeovil Recreation Centre (The Rec Café)

Alternatively, why not complete the online form by scanning the QR code?

Thank you for taking the time to have your say on this important project.





## Yeovil Town Council - Octagon Theatre Project

**EACH MEMBER OF THE ELECTORATE WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD MAY RESPOND TO THIS CONSULTATION.**

**You should only complete this survey if you live in the parish of Yeovil. If you do not live in the parish of Yeovil, your responses will not be included.**

**This consultation finishes at 23:59 on Sunday 21st September 2025.**

When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself.

\* Required

1. Full Name \*

Enter your answer

2. Address \*

Enter your answer

3. Postcode - **PLEASE FORMAT LIKE THIS: BA20 1PQ (example)** \*

Please enter at most 8 characters

4. Email Address \*

Enter your answer

5. Signed (Print Name) \*

Enter your answer

6. Date \*

Please input date (dd/MM/yyyy)



7. Are you in **FAVOUR** of Yeovil Town Council going ahead with the contribution of £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the Octagon Project resulting in borrowing of £3,325,000?

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. Are you in **FAVOUR** of Yeovil Town Council going ahead with the contribution of £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the Octagon Project resulting in borrowing of £3,325,000, if it includes a Council tax precept increase of **3.3%** (equivalent to £110,062.69) for the purpose of the loan re-payments?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Submit

**From:** Martin Hacker  
**Sent:** 13 August 2025 09:30  
**To:** Martin Hacker  
**Cc:** Card, Amanda; Adam Burgan  
**Subject:** Yeovil Town Council Press Release: Yeovil Town Council launches consultation on funding support for Octagon Theatre development  
**Attachments:** Yeovil Town Council Consultation - Final.docx; External 1st walkway.png

# Yeovil Town Council Press Release

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**13 August 2025**  
**For immediate release**

## **Yeovil Town Council launches consultation on funding support for Octagon Theatre development**

Yeovil Town Council has today launched a public consultation inviting residents to share their views on whether the Council should help fund the development and reopening of the Octagon Theatre.

The proposal would see the Council contribute £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the project, helping to transform and reopen one of Yeovil's most significant cultural venues that helps to support the economic prosperity of the town.

The consultation launched asks whether residents of Yeovil Town Council are in favour of going ahead with the contribution of £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the Octagon Theatre project which would result in borrowing of £3,325,000. The consultation also asks whether residents would be in favour of the Town Council going ahead with the loan and financial contribution to the project, if it includes a Council Tax precept increase of 3.3% for the purpose of the loan repayment.

A 3.3% precept increase equates to an annual Council Tax increase of £11.60 for an average Band D property (or 22p per week) over a 20-year period. 85.3% of properties in the parish of Yeovil are below a Band D, so contributions for most households would be less than this amount.

The Octagon Theatre development project has recently reached a key milestone with the concept design stage now complete which means that artists' impressions can now be shared. The



development would see the theatre redeveloped, refurbished and renewed to secure its future for generations. The new design proposals would see:

- The auditorium refurbished with new seating and carpets
- A new studio for classes in dance, music, theatre, and creative art
- A greatly improved café bar area open throughout the day
- Improved front of house customer facilities with a large increase in toilet provision, more accessible toilets, gender neutral toilets and a Changing Places facility
- Accessibility improved throughout the venue
- Improvements to the stage house and backstage area that will significantly improve our technical aspects of our productions.

Under the new scheme, the theatre is currently projected to reopen in the 2028/29 financial year. Following its reopening, the theatre would transfer under the ownership of Yeovil Town Council.

The Octagon Theatre closed at the end of April 2023 for survey works to take place ahead of planned development of the theatre. Months later, Somerset Council who currently own the theatre and had planned to redevelop it, declared their plans to develop the Octagon Theatre unviable due to their financial emergency and increases in interest and inflation that impacted the cost of borrowing and construction.

In October 2023, Yeovil Town Council held an emergency meeting and voted in favour to work in partnership with Somerset Council and offer support to see the Octagon Theatre developed and reopened. Since then, work has been going on behind the scenes that would see a total project budget of £15 million, with funding from Central Government (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport), Yeovil Town Council, Ticket Levy, Somerset Council, plus fundraising and other grants.

Councillor Andy Soughton, Leader of Yeovil Town Council, said: "This is your opportunity to have your say on the funding of the Octagon Theatre and ultimately, ensure that the new and improved venue reopens. We believe that the Octagon Theatre is a vital part of the cultural and leisure offering of our town and Yeovil Town Council can play a big part in the future of our town and the success of the theatre. I would urge all residents who live in the parish of Yeovil Town to read the information presented to you in the letter we send and have your say through either returning your consultation form or completing it online."

Yeovil Town Council has sent letters to each household in the parish which should be delivered the week commencing Monday 18<sup>th</sup> August. If you do not receive a letter then your household then it is likely that it does not fall within the parish boundary of Yeovil.

You can get additional information through the Yeovil Town Council website at [www.yeovil.gov.uk/octagon-theatre](http://www.yeovil.gov.uk/octagon-theatre) or attend one of two open events that will be held at Westlands Entertainment Venue on:

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> August, 2:00pm – 4:00pm

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 6:00pm – 8:00pm

The open events allow residents the opportunity to learn more and discuss the project and associated borrowing plan. The consultation will formally close on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September.

**ENDS**

## Notes to Editors:

Artists' impression of Octagon Theatre included for use.

### ***How will the project be fully funded?***

The total project budget is **£15 million**, with funding sources as follows:

Funding Source	Amount
Government Funding (DCMS)	£10,000,000
Yeovil Town Council	£3,750,000
Ticket Levy (collected by Somerset Council)	£541,000
Fundraising and other grants	£444,000
Somerset Council	£265,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£15,000,000</b>

### ***What would be the various Council Tax increases in the parish of Yeovil per household if the loan was approved and the Town Council went ahead with the borrowing?***

To borrow £3.325 million over a period of 20 years at a rate in the region of 5.8%, there will be an annual repayment of about £283,063, which will repay both principal and interest. The annual repayment will be funded by £173,000 of ticket levy (paid by users of the service) and remaining £110,063 by increasing the precept by 3.3%.

This equates to an increase of £11.60 per year for a Band D property (or 22 pence per week) for a 20-year period. It is important to note that 85.3% of dwellings in the parish of Yeovil are below a Band D.

The impact on the various Council tax bands is indicated below:

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Increase per year	£7.73	£9.02	£10.31	£11.60	£14.18	£16.76	£19.33	£23.20
Increase per week	£0.15	£0.17	£0.20	£0.22	£0.27	£0.32	£0.37	£0.44

### ***What happens next?***

There is a process that needs to be followed. Yeovil Town Council will collate the responses and use the results to support the application to borrow £3.325 million. Before sending to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government for Secretary of State Approval, the application will be sent to Somerset Association of Local Councils (SALC). SALC will check that the application has been completed correctly; that the relevant criteria has been met; and that the form is accompanied with other mandatory documentation.

### ***I want to comment on the design***



This consultation is just for asking residents in the parish of Yeovil Town whether they support the contribution towards the Octagon Theatre Project and if they support the increase in the Council tax precept to fund the project. There will be a separate consultation regarding planning later in the year.

***Why can't you reopen The Octagon until building works start?***

When The Octagon was closed all equipment was taken out of the theatre and invasive survey works took place. There would be significant costs and work needed to make repairs and get the theatre ready to operate along with the recruitment and training of staff and volunteers to operate. Programming for shows and tours takes place 6-18 months in advance. Development of the Octagon Theatre would see the theatre close again in 2026.

***Why not just leave The Octagon as it was? Does it really need development?***

The theatre is 50 years old and was not originally built as a theatre. There are a number of issues with the theatre in its current form; access backstage is very poor, access front of house is poor, there is a lack of toilet provision, the theatre is dated, tired and in need of development. The Octagon Theatre needs development to secure its long-term future. The £10m of government funding is a rare opportunity.

***What will happen to The Octagon if Yeovil Town residents do not support the project or the project does not go ahead?***

The development project would not be viable without the funding from Yeovil Town Council (unless another funder were to come forward). It is likely that the £10m from government would therefore not be awarded and the theatre would remain closed.

**For more information:**

Martin Hacker, Marketing Manager (Octagon Theatre & Westlands Entertainment Venue)  
01935 727297

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 [ytc@yeovil.gov.uk](mailto:ytc@yeovil.gov.uk)  [www.yeovil.gov.uk](http://www.yeovil.gov.uk)   
[@YeovilTownCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/YeovilTownCouncil)

**Martin Hacker**  
**Marketing Manager**

Tel: 01935 727297

The Octagon Theatre | Hendford | Yeovil | Somerset | BA20 1UX

Westlands Entertainment Venue | Westbourne Close | Yeovil | BA20 2DD



**Yeovil Town Council**

Web: [octagon-theatre.co.uk](http://octagon-theatre.co.uk) / [westlandseyeovil.co.uk](http://westlandseyeovil.co.uk)

Facebook: /TheOctagonTheatre /Westlands Yeovil

Twitter: @OctagonYeovil | @WestlandsYeovil



# YEOVIL PRESS

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SEPTEMBER 2025

THE PROJECT DANCE TEAM – LED BY YEOVIL LAD JAMES BAMFORD – WOWED THE AUDIENCE AT THE WESTLANDS ENTERTAINMENT VENUE WITH ITS LATEST PRODUCTION – BUSK! TURN TO **PAGES 66-67** FOR PHOTOS!  
FINAL PREPARATIONS ARE BEING MADE AHEAD OF THIS YEAR'S SUPER SATURDAY WHICH TAKES PLACE LATER THIS MONTH. TURN TO **PAGE 13** FOR MORE DETAILS!  
WE REMEMBER THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF VJ DAY AND TAKE A HISTORICAL LOOK AT THE HEROISM OF A VICTORIA CROSS RECIPIENT WHO WAS MARRIED TO A YEOVIL WOMAN. TURN TO **PAGES 24-25**.

FREE



## STILL TIME TO HAVE YOUR SAY ON OCTAGON THEATRE PROJECT

Turn to Pages 08-10 for news

Turn to Pages 27-32 & 49-54 for information from Yeovil Town Council



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## YEOVIL TOWN COUNCIL: OCTAGON THEATRE DEVELOPMENT FUNDING PLANS



### It's a small price to pay to see the Octagon come back to life

**THE** ever-popular Yeovil Amateur Operatic Society has thrown its support behind plans to get the Octagon Theatre reopened.

YAOS was established in Yeovil 125 years ago and over that time have been an important part of the cultural history of the town with many local business people and public figures being part of the society's family.

YAOS has enjoyed performing at the Octagon Theatre right from its origins, performing musical theatre shows biannually for 50 years.

The shows have enabled the nurturing of local talent and have brought the joy of musical theatre to the population of Yeovil and beyond.

A society spokesman said: "The Octagon Theatre is a huge asset to our town not only bringing both amateur and professional entertainment to the town, but also bringing much-needed revenue to local businesses.

"Each time a show comes to town local shops, pubs, restaurants and hotels benefit. To launch the new Octagon, in the heart of our town, which is going through its own re-birth is such a wonderful opportunity."

And the society spokesman added: "The ask of £11.60 (Band D) a year for households feels a small price to pay to see our wonderful

Octagon Theatre come back to life and serve as a centre for incredible stage entertainment and a home for local performers for generations to come.

"YAOS would like to express its overwhelming support for this proposal."

The society has performed a number of shows at the Westlands Yeovil entertainment venue since the Octagon closed.

But society members would probably be the first ones to say that YAOS really does need the big stage of the Octagon to allow them to showcase themselves most brilliantly.

The last show YAOS performed at the Octagon was Anything Goes from March 27 to April 1, 2023.

Since then the society has performed Into The Woods, Oklahoma!, Some Enchanted Evening and Charlie & The Chocolate Factory at Westlands. Next up is Come From Away from October 14-18. Turn to Pages 12 & 74 for more information.

**PHOTOS:** Members of Yeovil Amateur Operatic Society in Anything Goes – the last production YAOS performed at the Octagon Theatre back in early 2023. YAOS would love to return to a redeveloped Octagon. Photos: Yeovil Press.



### The Octagon is more than just bricks and seats - it is energy and it is joy

**THE** director of the Yeovil-based Project Dance group, James Bamford, has warned that if the proposals to redevelop the Octagon Theatre do not happen now – it could be the end of the road for the much-loved venue.

James, a former Westfield Academy student, has just seen his dance group present Busk at the Westlands Yeovil entertainment venue.

It is the third show Project Dance has put on at Westlands, but James would dearly love to be able to see his group perform at a redeveloped Octagon Theatre.

And James has said that people behind the scenes are working tirelessly in the hope of giving the Octagon a much-needed transformation and back open again.

"I've watched the people behind this work relentlessly pour their energy into making it happen," he said.

"Inspired by their passion for cultivating arts in the local area, over the last few years I have tried to do my bit to support the future of the Octagon.

"In collaboration with the Octagon I organised two 24-hour Dance Marathons at Westlands – 150 people dancing their hearts out through the night – and Collective, where we filled a stage with Somerset's young talent twice.

"Both raised money for the Octagon's future, but more than that, they showed me just how much people do care.

"The Octagon isn't just bricks and seats. It's energy. It's joy. It's the best of us."

But James added: "We now we find ourselves at a crossroads. Do we want a venue in the heart of Yeovil, renovated so it is fit for generations to come to learn, thrive, rest, feel safe, feel seen and be enriched by



art with exceptional talent from across the country visiting us on our doorstep? Or do we want the end? A £10million grant from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport is a once in a lifetime local investment, and we are on the brink of losing it, and our theatre, forever.

"This isn't just about refurbishment. Without this project, it's the end of the Octagon. Maybe you don't use it now. But your child might. Your neighbour might. Your grandparent might. Your grandchild might see their first panto and be inspired for life, that's what happened to me and so many people I know.

"Let's not lose the Octagon. Let's save the heart of our community."

Turn to Pages 66-67 for photos and news about Project Dance's performance of Busk at the Westlands Yeovil entertainment venue.

**PHOTO:** James Bamford, of Project Dance, speaking at the Westlands Yeovil entertainment venue on August 29 following the performance of Busk. Photo: Yeovil Press.

### Mixed bag of opinions from people at Octagon consultation events

**TWO** public consultation events were held at the Westlands Yeovil entertainment venue where people could ask questions about the proposed redevelopment of the Octagon Theatre to council officers and councillors.

The events were held so that Yeovil Town Council could provide more information to members of the public about the project and how it was going to be funded.

Council officers and councillors fielded many questions from people and there seemed to be a mixed bag of opinions on the subject.

The two events were held during the afternoon on Thursday, August 28, and again during the evening of Wednesday, September 3.

Among those in attendance were Yeovil Town Council's chief executive and town clerk Amanda Card; the council's director of culture, events and promotions Adam Burgan; council leader Cllr Andy Soughton; and Cllr Graham Oakes,

chairman of the council's culture, events and promotions committee.

**PHOTOS:** Yeovil Press.



Yeovil Town Council's director of culture, events and promotions, Adam Burgan (left), discusses the Octagon Theatre project with Ray Tostevin, of the Quicksilver Community Group, at the public consultation event at the Westlands Yeovil entertainment venue on August 28.



One of the information boards about the Octagon Theatre project which was on display.



Yeovil Town Council's Adam Burgan, director of culture, events and promotions (second right), is pictured with the chairman of Yeovil Town Council, Cllr Tony Lock (second left), and Yeovil Town Council members Cllrs Ashley Richards (left) and Rob Stickland (right).



Cllr Graham Oakes, chairman of Yeovil Town Council's culture, events and promotions committee, is pictured speaking to two people who visited the consultation event at Westlands Yeovil entertainment venue on August 28.



Yeovil Town Council's chief executive and town clerk Amanda Card is pictured with Cllr Andy Soughton, who is the council leader and chairman of the authority's finance and policy executive.



## YEOVIL TOWN COUNCIL: OCTAGON THEATRE DEVELOPMENT FUNDING PLANS



# Still time to have your say on funding support for Octagon Theatre development

YEOVIL Town Council has launched a public consultation inviting residents to share their views on whether the authority should help fund the development and reopening of the much-loved Octagon Theatre.

The proposal would see the council contribute £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the project, helping to transform and reopen one of Yeovil's most significant cultural venues that helps to support the economic prosperity of the town.

The consultation launched last month asks whether residents of Yeovil Town Council are in favour of going ahead with the contribution of £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the Octagon Theatre project which would result in borrowing of £3,325,000. The consultation also asks whether residents would be in favour of the town council going ahead with the loan and financial contribution to the project, if it includes a Council Tax precept increase of 3.3 per cent for the purpose of the loan repayment.

It is important to stress that this only applies to those people who live within the parish of Yeovil Town – not the parishes of Brympton, Yeovil Without or those residents whose Yeovil homes lie within the boundaries of East Coker and West Coker parishes.

A 3.3 per cent precept increase equates to an annual Council Tax rise of £11.60 for an average Band D property (or 22p per week) over a 20-year period.

The town council has said that 85.3 per cent of properties in the parish of Yeovil are below a Band D, so contributions for most households would be less than this

## Octagon is a vital part of Yeovil's cultural and leisure offering

THE leader of the Octagon Theatre, Cllr Andy Soughton, has said that the public consultation gives people the opportunity to have their say on the funding of the Octagon Theatre and – ultimately – ensure that the new and improved venue reopens.

"We believe that the Octagon Theatre is a vital part of the cultural and leisure offering of our town and Yeovil Town Council can play a big part in the future of our town and the success of the theatre," he said.

"I would urge all residents who live



amount.

The Octagon Theatre development project has recently reached a key milestone with the concept design stage now complete which means that artists' impressions can now be shared. The development would see the theatre redeveloped, refurbished and renewed to secure its future for generations. The

in the parish of Yeovil Town to read the information presented to you in the letter we send and have your say through either returning your consultation form or completing it online."

Yeovil Town Council has sent letters to each household in the parish. If you do not receive a letter then your household then it is likely that it does not fall within the parish boundary of Yeovil.

You can get additional information through the Yeovil Town Council website at [www.yeovil.gov.uk/octagon-theatre](http://www.yeovil.gov.uk/octagon-theatre).

new design proposals would see:

The auditorium refurbished with new seating and carpets.

A new studio for classes in dance, music, theatre, and creative art.

A greatly improved café bar area open throughout the day.

Improved front of house customer facilities with a large increase in toilet provision, more accessible toilets, gender neutral toilets and a Changing Places facility.

Accessibility improved throughout the venue. Improvements to the stage house and backstage area that will significantly improve our technical aspects of our productions.

Under the new scheme, the theatre is currently projected to reopen in the 2028-29 financial year.

Following its reopening, the theatre would transfer under the ownership of Yeovil Town Council.

The Octagon Theatre closed at the end of April 2023 for survey works to take place ahead of planned development of the theatre. Months later, Somerset Council - who currently own the theatre

and had planned to redevelop it - declared its plans to develop the Octagon unviable due to its financial emergency and increases in interest and inflation that impacted the cost of borrowing and construction.

In October 2023, Yeovil Town Council held an emergency meeting and voted in favour to work in partnership with Somerset Council and offer support to see the Octagon Theatre developed and reopened.

Since then, work has been going on behind the scenes that would see a total project budget of £15 million, with funding from Central Government (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport), Yeovil Town Council, Ticket Levy, Somerset Council, plus fundraising and other grants.

People have until Sunday, September 21, to take part in the consultation. More news about Yeovil Town Council's funding plans for the Octagon Theatre can be found on Pages 27-32 & 49-54.

PHOTO: How the entrance to the redeveloped Octagon Theatre would look.



**OCTAGON**  
THEATRE

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*Creating a flagship cultural venue  
for the arts and entertainment  
in Yeovil, Somerset -*

## The Octagon Theatre



Yeovil Town Council



## Creating Somerset's Flagship Arts Venue

We are delighted to share with you an update on the redevelopment plans for the Octagon Theatre that will see the current building transformed into a flagship venue for the arts and entertainment. This project will transform the theatre into a creative hub that will ensure residents across Somerset can enjoy amazing performances and opportunities to benefit from the creative arts and attract visitors from outside of Somerset to visit our beautiful county.

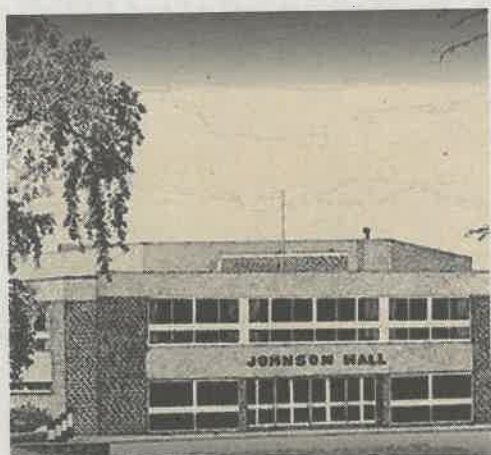
The Octagon Theatre closed at the end of April 2023 for invasive survey works to take place ahead of a planned £29m development of the theatre. Sadly, and just weeks away from construction work due to begin, the project was deemed "unviable" due to inflation impacting borrowing and the construction industry by Somerset Council who had also declared a "financial emergency" at the new unitary

authority. Yeovil Town Council arranged a public meeting on the future of the theatre with members voting to support the development of the Octagon Theatre. Working in partnership with Somerset Council, Yeovil Town Council voted to offer, in principle, capital funding to the development of the Octagon Theatre to secure the venues future for the town and to seek to keep the £10m of government funding for the development. We are pleased to share with you our plans, vision and ambitions for this exciting development that will help to secure the future of the Octagon Theatre for generations to come.





Images from our history - The Octagon Theatre opened as The Johnson Hall in 1974.



"The Octagon Theatre has played a hugely important role in the life of Yeovil Town for 50 years. Many of our residents have grown up with visits to the Octagon being an important part of their lives and at key milestones through their life from their first visit, trips with school and with family, performing with local groups, graduation and seeing their favourite performers come to the town. The Octagon brings people from the surrounding area into our town, providing an economic boost for our businesses and being a place that bring us together for great entertainment. The town is proud of our Octagon Theatre and it is vital for Yeovil."

Cllr Andy Soughton, Leader of Yeovil Town Council





## The stage is set...

The Octagon Theatre is the largest and principle theatre venue in Somerset having opened in 1974 (then known as The Johnson Hall). Millions of people have been entertained in our theatre and each year we present a diverse range of artists and events, from big name comedians, classical music and opera to rock and folk music, the very best in variety as well as superb plays and ballets, and not forgetting our yearly blockbuster pantomime. The Octagon Theatre plays a significant role in the life of the community, home to a thriving amateur scene, whereby local community groups have become a hub for participation in the creative arts.

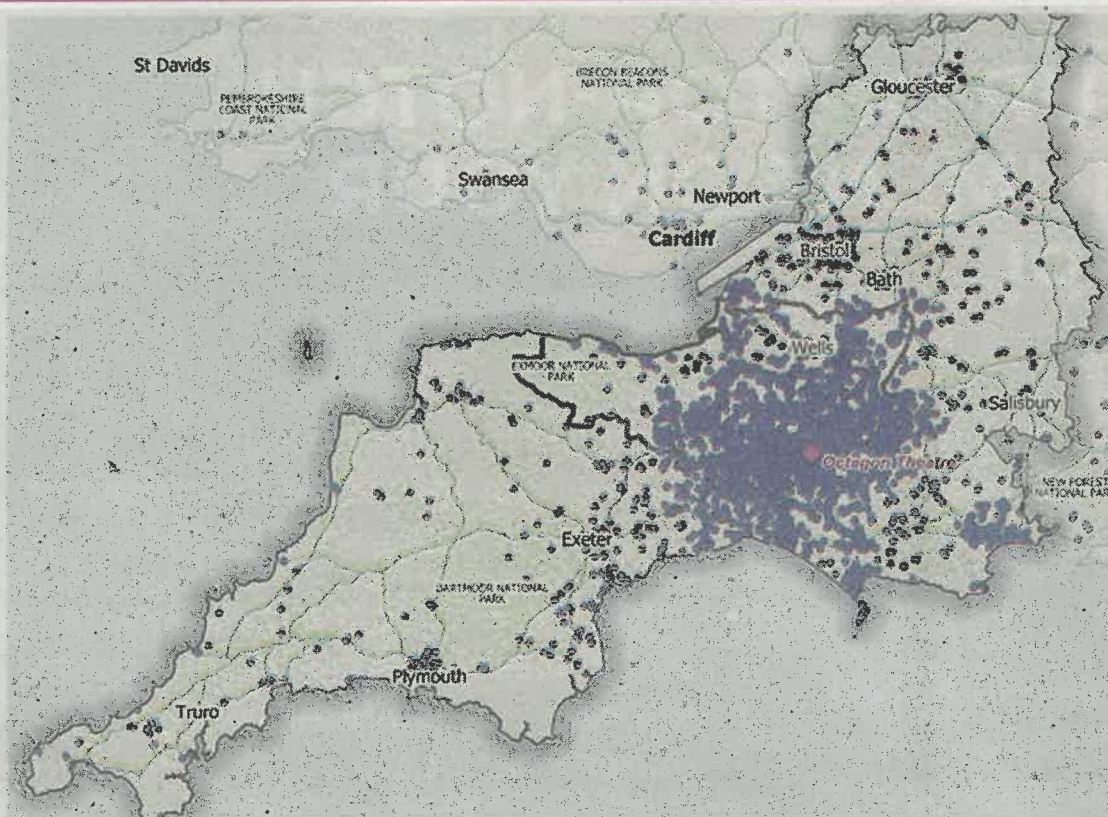
Each year around 125,000 people purchase a ticket for an event at the Octagon Theatre, attracting audiences from across the South West and beyond. The Octagon Theatre has been regularly achieving an average of 83% capacity throughout the years with upwards of 250 performances staged annually, significantly above the industry average of 50-60% capacity. In addition, thousands of people take part each month in one of our weekly classes as part of our Octagon Academy participatory programme. As a result, the high usage has taken its toll on the 50-year-old building.

Whilst the front of house areas were extended and seating refurbished in 2003, there is no disabled access backstage for visitors, staff, artists or volunteers and we currently only have one accessible toilet situated front of house. The front of house areas have begun to look tired, dated and often feel cramped. The popular and profitable café bar is hampered by being wrapped around the auditorium with diners' meals interrupted by the arrival of audience members. The kitchen is small and inadequate for the size of the restaurant and the front of house areas lack air conditioning. The popular Octagon Academy classes take place in a small studio obstructed by a supporting pillar in the

middle of the room, with no windows or air cooling and a lack of ceiling height for dance classes. The Octagon Theatre remains one of the most popular theatres in the South West with a loyal and enthusiastic audience, a passionate volunteer base in The Foyer Club and talented team who are devoted to the venue. A feasibility study was commissioned in 2019 to explore how the venue could be developed to address these issues, and to look at the wider Somerset and South West area that the theatre serves and considered what opportunities and needs within the area were not being met.

Yeovil and the wider Somerset deserves a better venue and the Octagon Theatre is well placed geographically to serve the region with the organisation, under the management and support of Yeovil Town Council, having the financial track record and robust plan to develop the theatre for the next 50 years and beyond.





Each dot on the map represents a customer who purchased a ticket for our venues (Octagon Theatre & Westlands Entertainment Venue) between 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024. It does not capture how many tickets they purchased (or information for accompanying guests) or how many times they purchased tickets that year.



"The arts make life better, and I am passionate that all our residents in Yeovil should have opportunities to experience and take part in them as part of a broad offer of culture, leisure, sports and green spaces. Yeovil Town Council now runs Westlands Entertainment Venue, Yeovil Rec, South Somerset Heritage Collection and Yeovil Country Park. We are proud to provide a range of facilities for our residents to enjoy. The cultural sector contributes billions of pounds a year to the UK economy. It supports local businesses and a wide range of other sectors; from hospitality to retail, transport to tourism. The arts can cultivate our creativity, driving greater innovation and entrepreneurship, driving skills and employment opportunities."

Amanda Card, Chief Executive, Yeovil Town Council

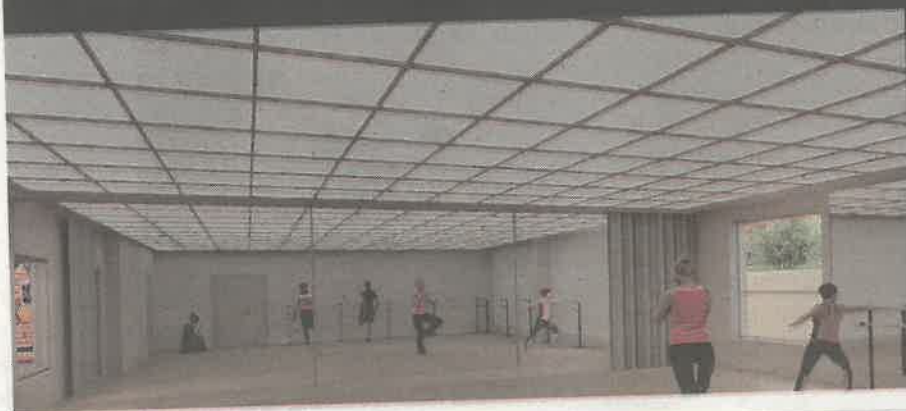




# CURTAIN UP ON TOP-NOTCH ENTERTAINMENT ON YOUR DOORSTEP!

Our proposals see the Octagon Theatre developed, refurbished and renewed to secure the theatre for future generations.

- The auditorium will be refurbished with new seating, carpets, maintaining our excellent leg room, comfort and sightlines
- A new studio will be the perfect place for classes in dance, music, drama and theatre, and creative art. A home for our popular choirs, dance and theatre groups, and arts and craft workshops.
- A greatly improved café bar area open throughout the day for the public and patrons to enjoy and relax.
- Improved front of house and customer facilities with a large increase in toilet provision with toilets on each level, more accessible toilets, gender neutral toilets and a Changing Places facility.
- Accessibility is improved throughout the venue, both front of house and backstage.
- Improvements to the stage house and backstage area will significantly improve the technical aspects of our productions.
- The Octagon Theatre would become The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's "home in Somerset".
- The proposals create a "flagship cultural hub for Somerset" with investment of £10m from government on the building project and ongoing investment through Arts Council England for our Arts Engagement & Outreach programme and The Octagon Music Hub Lead Organisation for music education in Somerset and Dorset.







Artist Impression of the proposed Octagon Café



To get in touch - email [yeovilpress@gmail.com](mailto:yeovilpress@gmail.com)

YOUR new local newspaper that covers YOUR local area 49



## Current Timeline...

The design project team has been led by experienced theatre architects, Burrell Foley Fischer and we have completed Stage 2 RIBA designs.

### April 2023

The Octagon Theatre was "put to sleep" with a special performance from local dancer Davina Derrick from Helen Laxton Dance Company, as the finale to our big community celebration "SHINE". Work was then undertaken to clear the theatre of all the equipment, furniture and fittings along with more invasive survey work.

### October 2023

Somerset Council declares a "financial emergency" and proposals to develop the Octagon Theatre are deemed unviable due to increased interest rates and inflation impacting the construction sector.

### November 2023

Yeovil Town Council offers to work in partnership with Somerset Council to secure the future of the Octagon Theatre with members voting in principle to provide a financial grant of £3.75m.

### 2024

Through 2024 Somerset Council (against the backdrop of a financial emergency) and Yeovil Town Council work in partnership with Arts Council England and DCMS to establish a new scope for development of the Octagon Theatre. Procurement exercises take place to appoint a new design team, Project Managers and Cost Consultants.

Burrell Foley Fisher are appointed to lead the architect-led design team.

Working with the Octagon team, the scope for the development is completed exploring what can be achieved with the finances available.

### 2025

June RIBA 2 (Concept Design) has been completed and approved by both authorities.

Yeovil Town Council will undertake consultation with residents of Yeovil Town on funding for the Octagon development.

RIBA 3 (Spatial Coordination) begins with more technical drawings and a deeper level of detail and information. This stage will be completed in October 2025 and planning permission will be submitted.

### 2026

Planning Permission is secured.

RIBA 4 (Technical Design) is undertaken and completed.

A contractor is appointed and mobilised with building work starting towards the end of the year.

### 2027/28

Construction work will take place and the development of the Octagon takes place with key construction milestones.

### 2028/29

Construction work is completed and the building is decorated, with furniture and equipment installed. There is a period of commissioning, snagging and training as staff move back into the theatre, which is currently anticipated to reopen in winter.



## Funding The Project...

The total project is budgeted to cost £15m which includes contingency and allowances for inflation. The project is being managed by Somerset Council who will deliver the project and upon completion, the Octagon Theatre will be transferred to Yeovil Town Council who will operate the theatre as a 'sister' venue to Westlands Entertainment Venue (already operated by Yeovil Town Council).

Fundraising can also be fun! Castaways Theatre Group joined some of our staff for a sponsored 24-hour sleepover at the venue and we welcomed comedian, ventriloquist and winner of America's Got Talent! Paul Zerdin for a performance, with all ticket proceeds being donated to our Name A Seat campaign. Paul is a patron of our Name A Seat initiative and all money from the campaign is going towards the development of the theatre.

You too can get involved with our 'Name A Seat' campaign. From £150, you can have a personalised plaque on a seat within our new auditorium. Contributing now means that you will be placed on our priority list and contacted to choose a seat for your plaque once the seating plan has been designed.

The development of the Octagon Theatre will provide an economic boost for Yeovil and the surrounding area. On reopening the Octagon will generate £9m of economic activity annually and support 160 jobs throughout the economy.

Whilst the economic basis for development is compelling, this project is also about improving the health and wellbeing of everyone living within our county and beyond. We passionately believe that everyone should have access to the arts and that they have the ability to transform people's lives.



You can support our work and the redevelopment of the theatre by making a donation to help the arts thrive in Somerset. Scan our QR code and make a donation online.

Government Funding (DCMS)	£10,000,000
Yeovil Town Council	£3,750,000*
Ticket Levy - Existing funding generated by users of The Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue	£541,000
Fundraising and other grants	£444,000
Somerset Council	£265,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£15,000,000</b>

*\*funding from Yeovil Town Council is proposed to be a combination of funding from reserves and borrowing, a proportion of which would be repaid via the Ticket Levy. This funding is subject to a public consultation with Yeovil Town Council residents.*



### Could the money be spent on something else?

The £10m of government funding was allocated specifically to the development of the Octagon Theatre. There are a number of approval gateways to be met before the funding is confirmed and released prior to construction. If the funding were to be withdrawn or the development were not to go ahead and the funding was declined, it would return to the treasury and could not be allocated to another project in Yeovil or Somerset. The grant of £3.75m from Yeovil Town Council would be made specifically for the Octagon a portion of this funding will also be repaid by users of the theatre via the ticket levy. Other fundraising was given specifically for the development of the Octagon Theatre and cannot be used for other projects.

### Why can't you reopen the Octagon until building works start?

When the Octagon was closed all equipment was taken out of the theatre and invasive survey works took place. There would be significant costs and work needed to make repairs and get the theatre ready to operate once more. Programming for shows and tours takes place 6-18 months in advance. The number of staff working across both venues was also reduced and it would take time to recruit and train staff. Development of the Octagon Theatre would see the theatre close again in 2026.

### Why not just leave the Octagon as it was? Does it really need development?

We all miss the Octagon Theatre very much. The theatre is 50 years old and was not originally built as a theatre. There are a number of issues with the theatre in its current form; access backstage is very poor, access front of house is poor, there is a lack of toilet provision, the theatre is dated, tired and in need of development. While we all want to see the Octagon back open, we believe the chance to develop the theatre and secure its long-term future is worth the wait. We are also unlikely to see £10m of national funding for the Octagon again in our lifetime and believe it would be a shame to miss out on this opportunity.

### Is there a risk the project will overrun on time and budget?

Large scale capital projects are complicated and we were very disappointed that the previous scheme was not able to be delivered. We have therefore built greater levels of contingency into the project in terms of budget and timescales. The project is being carefully managed and all of the partners involved have their own processes for managing risk, scrutiny, accountability and ensuring value for money for public funding. The team are focussed on delivering the very best outcome and seeing the Octagon back open and developed and secured for future generations.





The creation of a Flagship Cultural Hub for Somerset has been many years in the making so we would like to thank everyone who has supported our journey so far and helped us to reach this exciting moment. You can follow the progress of the project at our website [octagon-theatre.co.uk](http://octagon-theatre.co.uk)



*"Our officers, members and project team are working incredibly hard to create a flagship cultural venue that the whole of Somerset can be proud of and that will bring so much joy to our residents and countless benefits. It is one of the most significant projects and investments being made by Somerset Council and I look forward to seeing the transformational effects this project will bring for the communities we serve."*

**Cllr Mike Best**, Chairman, Somerset Council and Octagon Project Board



### Contact Us...

We invite you to be part of the conversation and thank you for taking the time to read this information. We hope you found it interesting, exciting and helpful. You can contact us in the following ways:

#### Email us:

[octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk](mailto:octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk)

#### Write to us:

The Octagon Theatre, Hendford, Yeovil, Somerset BA20 1UX

#### Engage with us via social media:

-  /TheOctagonTheatre
-  @OctagonYeovil
-  @OctagonYeovil
-  @OctagonYeovil







Yeovil Town Council

YEOVIL TOWN COUNCIL

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[www.octagon-theatre.co.uk](http://www.octagon-theatre.co.uk)







# THE OCTAGON: OUR HISTORY

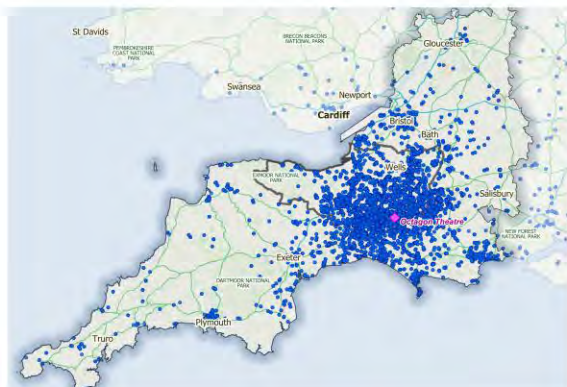


The Octagon Theatre opened as The Johnson Hall in 1974. It was built as a replacement for the town hall that had burnt down in the 1930s and wasn't built as a theatre. The building has been developed over the years but some parts of the building have remain unchanged since 1974, particularly the backstage area.





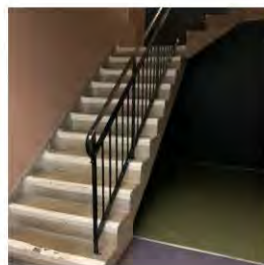
# THE NEED FOR INVESTMENT



Each dot on the map represents a customer who purchased a ticket for our venues (Octagon Theatre & Westlands Entertainment Venue) between 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024. It does not capture how many tickets they purchased (or information for accompanying guests) or how many times they purchased tickets that year.

The Octagon Theatre is the largest and principal theatre in Somerset. The theatre is home to a thriving amateur scene, and each year around 125,000 people purchase a ticket for an event, attracting audiences from across the South West and beyond.

The Octagon Theatre has been regularly achieving an average of 83% capacity throughout the years, with upwards of 250 performances staged annually, significantly above the industry average of 50-60% capacity. In addition, thousands of people take part each month in one of our weekly classes as part of our Octagon Academy participatory programme.



The Octagon Theatre has long been in need of investment to address access issues. The auditorium needs refurbishing and improved technical facilities would support bigger productions. The front of house areas are in need of refurbishment and additional toilets, while the studio is hampered by a pillar in the middle of the room.





# CURTAIN UP: ACCESSIBILITY



Accessibility is improved throughout the venue, both front of house and backstage with accessible toilets and showers backstage, and lift access throughout the venue, including backstage.



The front of house areas will have accessible toilets on every level and a Changing Places facility.





# CURTAIN UP: STUDIO

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Our popular participatory programme 'The Octagon Academy' will have a new home within our Studio. The Studio is a large fully equipped multi-purpose dance studio, suitable for a variety of classes. The studio will become a creative hub for dance in the region. Perfect for all dance classes and as a rehearsal space, our Studio will be the place where local dancers of all ages learn new skills, develop their talent and prepare for performances on stage.



The Studio also offers an alternative space for additional classes and rehearsals, including our popular choir, theatre groups and arts and crafts workshops. Our participatory programme brings communities together in forging new friendships and improving the health and well-being of local residents.

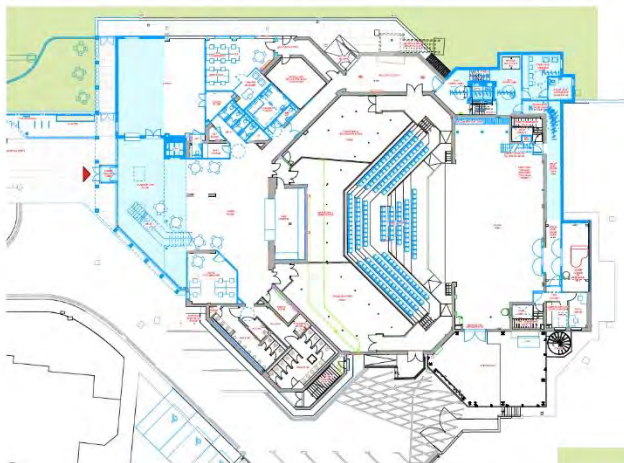


# CURTAIN UP: AUDITORIUM



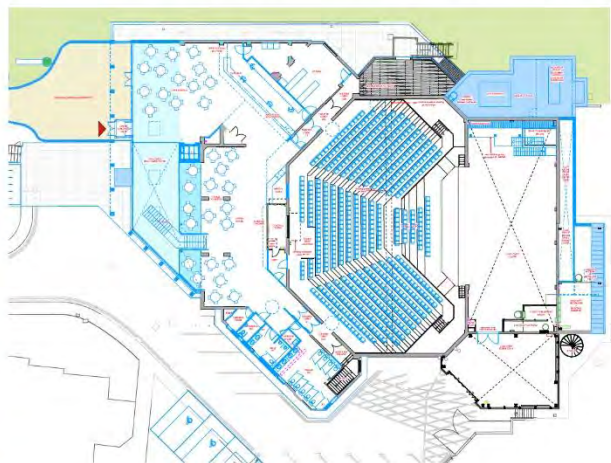
The auditorium will be refurbished to include new carpets and replacing the seats that are sorely in need of repair and replacement. While we may tweak the layout, we will be retaining the excellent site lines and, legroom, comfort and intimacy we know our patrons and artists love about the theatre.

**PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR & STAGE LEVEL**



The proposals create a "flagship cultural hub for Somerset" with investment of £10m from government on the building project and ongoing investment through Arts Council England for our Arts Engagement & Outreach programme and The Octagon Music Hub Lead Organisation for music education in Somerset and Dorset.

**PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN**





# CURTAIN UP: BACKSTAGE

Improvements to the stage house and backstage area will significantly improve the technical aspects of our productions. Raising the roof will enable us to fly cloths out and a backstage crossover will support the ambitions of our programme and our talented local community groups.

**The Octagon Theatre  
would become The  
Bournemouth Symphony  
Orchestra's "Home in  
Somerset".**





# CURTAIN UP: CAFE BAR



A greatly improved Cafe Bar area offering food and drink throughout the day for the public and patrons to enjoy and relax. The new entrance to the theatre will create a better first impression and welcome to the theatre.

Our new venue will be accessible to everyone, addressing and resolving the current access inadequacies and transforming the venue to offer a warm welcome to everyone with improved facilities for those with any disability.



On the first floor, directly in front of the main entrance and at the 'heart' of the new venue will be our relaxed and cosy Cafe Bar. Open throughout the day, this will be the perfect place to meet friends and family whether you are attending a performance, a class, or just finding a quiet corner to read a book.



Yeovil Town Council



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# CURTAIN UP: FRONT OF HOUSE



Customers will enter on the first floor, level with Petter's Way car park, with no need to use the sloped path or steps.

A greatly improved front of house will offer attractive foyers for use throughout the day with excellent supporting bars and eating opportunities.

The development will give the opportunity to architecturally mark the gateway to Yeovil Country Park.

There is also an increase in toilet provision meaning less time spent in the queue during the interval and more time to enjoy an ice cream or refreshing drink!

Some enhancements may go unnoticed but will ensure “the show must go on” making the necessary improvements to secure the future of the Octagon for future generations.





# YOUR CHANCE TO REOPEN THE OCTAGON THEATRE

We believe that the Octagon Theatre is vital part of the cultural and leisure offering of our town, benefiting our residents, attracting visitors and supporting the economic prosperity of Yeovil. Once completed, the Octagon Theatre will be transferred to Yeovil Town Council who will manage the theatre.



Yeovil is made up of various different parishes and you are being written to as a resident of the parish of Yeovil Town. Some of your friends, family and neighbours may live in a different parish of Yeovil and will therefore not receive this information or be part of this consultation.

On reopening the Octagon will generate £9m of economic activity annually and support 160 jobs throughout the economy.

## RESIDENT CONSULTATION

### Question 1

Are you in FAVOUR of Yeovil Town Council going ahead with the contribution of £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the Octagon Theatre Project resulting in borrowing of £3,325,000?

### Question 2

Are you in FAVOUR of Yeovil Town Council going ahead with the contribution of £3,964,500 (including Stamp Duty) towards the Octagon Theatre Project resulting in borrowing of £3,325,000, if it includes a Council tax precept increase of 3.3% (equivalent to £110,062.69) for the purpose of the loan repayments?



Yeovil Town Council



[www.yeovil.gov.uk](http://www.yeovil.gov.uk)








# FUNDING THE PROJECT

The total project budget is £15 million, with funding sources as follows:

Government Funding (DCMS)	£10,000,000
Yeovil Town Council	£3,750,000*
Ticket Levy- Existing funding generated by users of the Octagon Theatre and Westlands Entertainment Venue	£541,000
Fundraising and other grants	£444,000
Somerset Council	£265,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£15,000,000</b>

*\*funding from Yeovil Town Council is proposed to be a combination of funding from reserves and borrowing, a proportion of which would be repaid via the Ticket Levy. This funding is subject to a public consultation with Yeovil Town Council residents.*

## YEOVIL TOWN COUNCIL CONTRIBUTIONS

-  **Proposed Investment** - £3.75m to help secure £10m government funding
-  **Total Contributions** - £3,964,500 (including £214,500 stamp duty)
-  **Funding** - £639,500 reserves + £3,325,000 loan (borrowed over 20 years at a rate in the region of 5.9%)
-  **Annual Loan Repayment** - £283,063 (funded by £173,000 of ticket levy + £110,063 from precept increase)
-  **Impact on Residents** - +3.3% precept

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Increase per year	7.73	9.02	10.31	11.60	14.18	16.76	19.33	23.20
Increase per week	0.15	0.17	0.20	0.22	0.27	0.32	0.37	0.44

**Note** - 85.3% of dwellings in the parish of Yeovil are below a Band D



# HAVING YOUR SAY



Anyone in the Yeovil Town parish boundary, marked here, can have their say on the Yeovil Town Council financial contribution consultation.

## COMPLETING YOUR CONSULTATION RESPONSE

Anyone in the Parish of Yeovil Town has been sent a letter and information pack on the consultation. If you have not received one, its likely you do not live in the parish of Yeovil Town.

Please complete and return your consultation response questionnaire in the following ways:



Yeovil Town Council  
Town House  
19 Union Street  
Yeovil  
Somerset  
BA20 1PQ



[octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk](mailto:octagontheatre@yeovil.gov.uk)



Westlands Entertainment Venue (Box Office)  
Yeovil Country Park (Ninesprings Cafe)  
Yeovil Recreation Centre (The Rec Cafe)



Complete the online form by scanning the QR code



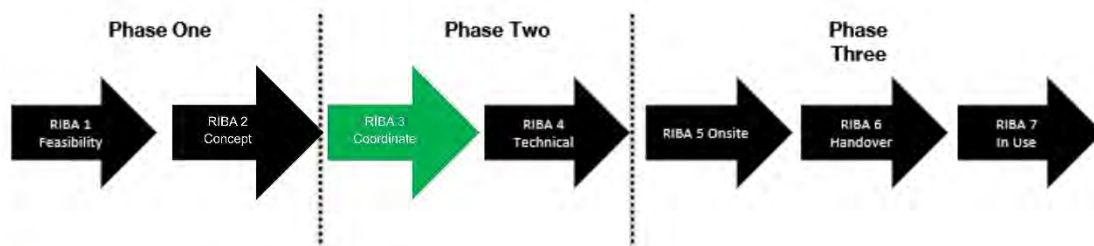


# PROJECT TIMELINE

## PREVIOUSLY...

- ➔ May 2023: Theatre closed for clearance of furniture and equipment
  - ➔ June / July 2023: Invasive surveys undertaken
    - ➔ October 2023: Somerset Council declares project unviable
    - ➔ October 2023: Yeovil Town Council held an emergency meeting and voted in favour to work in partnership with Somerset Council and offer support to see the Octagon Theatre developed and reopened.
  - ➔ 2024: Whilst in a 'Financial Emergency', Somerset Council work with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to confirm if they would fund a smaller capital project, appoint new project managers / cost consultants and design team.

## WHERE WE ARE NOW



- ✓ Completed RIBA 2 Design
- ✓ Explored options for enabling full flying of cloths
- ✓ Prepared RIBA 2 Cost Plan
- ✓ Found option within budget that enables full flying and replacement of seats and carpets
- ✓ Submitted Pre App to Planning Authority



# PROJECT TIMELINE

## CURRENT WORKS

### 2025

- ➔ Yeovil Town Council is undertaking a consultation with residents of Yeovil Town on funding for the Octagon development.
- ➔ RIBA 3 (Spatial Coordination) has begun with more technical drawings and a deeper level of detail and information. This stage will be completed in October 2025 and planning permission submitted.

## FUTURE WORKS

### 2026

- ➔ Planning permission is secured.
- ➔ RIBA 4 (Technical Design) is undertaken and completed
- ➔ A contractor is appointed and mobilised with building work starting towards the end of the year.

### 2027/28

- ➔ Construction work will take place and the development of the Octagon takes place with key construction milestones.

### 2028/29

- ➔ Construction work is completed and the building is decorated, with furniture and equipment installed. There is a period of commissioning, snagging and training as staff move back into the theatre, which is currently anticipated to reopen in winter.



# CONSULTATION FAQs

## Why are only the residents who live in the Parish of Yeovil being consulted?

The loan would be taken out by Yeovil Town Council. Yeovil Town Council do not have the power to raise the precept of other councils. Only the electorate in the parish of Yeovil are being consulted because any increase in Council Tax by Yeovil Town Council, due to the Octagon project, will not affect residents who do not live within that particular parish.

## What does the stamp duty relate to?

Unfortunately, Councils are not exempt from taxes and duties set by HMRC. Upon completion of the project the Octagon Theatre will transfer to Yeovil Town Council. HMRC will view that the £3.75 million contributed to the project is not freely given, and therefore subject to stamp duty. Advice is being sought about how this can be challenged.

## What is the PWLB?

PWLB stands for Public Works Loan Board. It is a UK government body that historically provides loans to local authorities for capital projects. Though the statutory board was abolished in 2020, its functions continue under HM Treasury and are administered by the UK Debt Management Office.

## Is there a risk the project will overrun on time and budget?

There is a greater contingency in this project in terms of budget and timescales. The project is being carefully managed and all of the partners involved have their own processes for managing risk, scrutiny, accountability and ensuring value for money.

## What if interest rates rise - will residents be paying more?

If Yeovil Town Council do borrow, it will be a fixed rate so if interest rates do increase, there will be no fluctuation in the amounts repayable.

## Have any contributions been secured from other parish councils?

Contributions have not been secured from other parish councils. We have received contributions from Yeovil Without Parish and East Coker Parish for the wider devolution of services.



# DEVELOPMENT FAQs

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## Could the government funding be spent on something else?

The £10m of government funding was allocated specifically to the development of the Octagon Theatre. If the funding were to be withdrawn or the development were not to go ahead, it would return to the treasury and could not be allocated to another project in Yeovil or Somerset.

## What will happen to the Octagon if Yeovil Town residents do not support the project or the project does not go ahead?

The development project would not be viable without the funding from Yeovil Town Council (unless another funder were to come forward). It is likely that the £10m from government would therefore not be awarded and the theatre would remain closed.

## How can I get involved?

Yeovil Town Council is consulting directly with residents until 21 September 2025. Wider public consultation will take place as part of the planning process later in 2025. Details of fundraising opportunities including "Name A Seat" are available on the Octagon website or at Westlands Entertainment Venue.

## Why can't you reopen the Octagon until building works start?

When the Octagon was closed, all equipment was taken out of the theatre and invasive survey works took place. There would be significant costs and work needed to make repairs and get the theatre ready to operate along with the recruitment and training of staff and volunteers to operate. Programming for shows and tours takes place 6-18 months in advance. Development of the Octagon Theatre would see the theatre close again in 2026.

## Does it really need development?

The theatre is 50 years old and was not originally built as a theatre. There are a number of issues with the theatre in its current form; access backstage is very poor, access front of house is poor, there is a lack of toilet provision, the theatre is dated, tired and in need of development. The Octagon Theatre is in need of development to secure its long-term future. The £10m of government funding is a rare opportunity.



Yeovil Town Council



[www.yeovil.gov.uk](http://www.yeovil.gov.uk)





# Yeovil Town Council

Town House  
19 Union Street  
Yeovil  
Somerset  
BA20 1PQ

Website : [www.yeovil.gov.uk](http://www.yeovil.gov.uk)

Amanda Card Chief Executive / Town Clerk

Parish/Town Council

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2025  
Your Ref:  
Our Ref:  
Ask for:  
E-mail: amanda.card@yeovil.gov.uk

Dear Clerk

## Financial Support for the Octagon Theatre Project

We are writing to request your consideration of funding to support the redevelopment of the Octagon Theatre in Yeovil.

As the principal theatre serving Somerset and Dorset, the Octagon has welcomed over 120,000 audience members annually and played a vital role in enriching the cultural life of our communities while contributing significantly to the local economy. We are aware that many residents of your parish value and regularly attend performances at the venue.

The theatre closed in May 2023 in preparation for a major redevelopment project initially budgeted at £29.01 million. Due to the financial constraints faced by Somerset Council, this original scheme has been scaled back. A revised, yet impactful project is now being developed, with a current budget of approximately £15 million, funded through:

- **£10 million** from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
- **£3.75 million** (in principle) from Yeovil Town Council
- **£1.75 million** from other secured or anticipated sources (including fundraising, ticket levies, and Section 106 contributions)

The overarching aim remains to transform the Octagon Theatre into a “**cultural hub**” for Somerset, Dorset, and the wider region. The venue has already been designated as an **Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation** and appointed as the **Music Education Hub Lead Organisation** for Somerset and Dorset, with ongoing funding from Arts Council England and the Department for Education. These developments demonstrate the

significant educational and cultural benefits the theatre will deliver for residents across the region.

Somerset Council will continue to lead and manage the redevelopment project, but as you will be aware, the Council has declared a financial emergency and cannot provide additional funding. Yeovil Town Council has stepped forward to take over the theatre's long-term management once redevelopment is complete, demonstrating its commitment to the theatre's future. YTC's proposed funding is currently subject to public consultation.

As part of this consultation, we have received strong feedback from residents in various parishes expressing support for the theatre and suggesting that their own parish councils might wish to give a one-off capital contribution toward its future, following the framework below:

<b>Council annual precept</b>	<b>Suggested one-off capital contribution</b>
Under £50,000	£1,000
£50,000 - £250,000	£25,000
£250,000 - £500,000	£50,000
£500,000 - £1million	£100,000
Over £1million	£200,000

We are therefore inviting local parish and town councils to join us in securing the future of the Octagon Theatre. Your support would form part of a broader collaborative effort to sustain and enhance this valuable regional asset.

We would be pleased to attend a future meeting of your council to discuss this proposal in more detail and answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for considering this important opportunity. By working together, we can ensure that the Octagon Theatre continues to serve and inspire our communities for generations to come.

Yours faithfully



**Cllr Andy Soughton**  
**Leader of Yeovil Town Council**  
**Chair of Finance & Policy Executive**



**Amanda Card**  
**Chief Executive / Town Clerk**



**Cllr Graham Oakes**  
**Chair of Culture, Events & Promotions**



**Adam Burgan**  
**Director of Culture, Events & Promotions**



**Letter sent to:**

Barwick and Stoford Parish Council  
Bruton Town Council  
Brympton Parish Council  
Castle Cary Town Council  
Chard Town Council  
Chilthorne Domer Parish Council  
Crewkerne Town Council  
East Coker Parish Council  
Henstridge Parish Council  
Huish Episcopi Parish Council  
Ilchester Parish Council  
Ilminster Town Council  
Langport Town Council  
Martock Parish Council  
Milborne Port Parish Council  
Montacute Parish Council  
Mudford Parish Council  
Norton Sub Hamdon Parish Council  
Somerton Town Council  
South Petherton Parish Council  
Stoke Sub Hamdon Parish Council  
West Coker Parish Council  
Wincanton Town Council  
Yeovil Without Parish Council  
Sherborne Town Council