

PHOENIX THEATRE

BLYTH

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

APPLICATION PACK

Leadership • Culture • Community • Sustainability



Contents

01 Welcome from the Chair

02 About the Phoenix Theatre

03 About the Area

04 The Opportunity

05 Operations, Buildings & Resources

06 The Role

07 Job Description

08 Person Specification

09 Terms of Appointment

10 How to Apply

Welcome from the Chair

Thank you for your interest in the role of Executive Director at the Phoenix Theatre Blyth.

For more than five decades, the Phoenix has been at the heart of cultural life, not only in Blyth, but also in South-East Northumberland. Over the years, we have welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors through our doors, entertained generations of audiences, inspired hundreds of young people through participation and education, provided opportunities for all genres of entertainers and demonstrated that an independent charitable theatre can achieve artistic excellence while remaining firmly rooted within the community it serves.

Over the years we have faced many challenges, including the enforced closure due to Covid, and now we stand at another important point in our journey. The cultural landscape continues to evolve – audiences are changing, expectations are increasing and arts organisations must be increasingly resilient, entrepreneurial and innovative in order to thrive and survive. At the same time, our town of Blyth is undergoing regeneration, creating exciting opportunities for culture to play a leading role in shaping the future of the town.

The Phoenix Theatre has earned an enviable reputation for delivering high-quality entertainment and service provision. We benefit from a committed and knowledgeable Board of Trustees, an experienced staff team, dedicated volunteers and loyal and appreciative audiences who continue to support our work.

As we look ahead to the next chapter, we want the theatre to continue in this exceptional vein, but we want to become one of the leading independent cultural organisations in the North-East – recognised not only for artistic excellence, but also for community leadership, financial sustainability, innovation and social impact.

To achieve this ambition, we are seeking a leader who can honour the Phoenix's history, whilst helping to shape its next transformation – someone with a passion for the arts, who can balance creativity with sound business acumen, someone who can lead a team, think strategically, develop productive partnerships, secure investment and with a genuine belief that culture can play a role in sustaining communities and creating opportunities. We are also looking for someone who understands the realities of running and maintaining a 30-year-old building.

If you share our ambition and believe in the power of culture to transform communities, we would be delighted to hear from you.

We look forward to receiving your application.

David Garrett

Chair of the Board of Trustees, Phoenix Theatre (Blyth)



About the Phoenix Theatre

The Phoenix Theatre is located in the heart of the town of Blyth, South-East Northumberland and boasts a 299-seater auditorium and 60-seater multi-purpose Studio.

We produce a diverse professional and amateur theatrical programme throughout the year, supporting local groups and organisations, as well as providing a venue for corporate and private events and functions. Our customers, in the main, come from South-East Northumberland, but over the last few years, the catchment area has widened into North & South Tyneside, Newcastle and North Northumberland, as well as further afield. Inroads have also been made to attract customers from traditionally “difficult to reach” areas.

The theatre is owned by an incorporated charitable trust and managed by a Board of Directors and supported by a very small team of paid employees and a larger volunteer workforce, who, together, manage all the operational and strategic functions of the organisation.

We were delighted in 2015 when we were recognised with the awarding of the Queens Award for Voluntary Organisations – a fitting tribute to our dedication and commitment.

We pride ourselves on listening to our audiences and over the past 50 years have established ourselves within Blyth and South-East Northumberland as a primary venue for entertainment, as well as being one of the only contributors to night-time economy within the area. We continually rate at the highest levels on social media platforms and receive regular accolades from customers and partners.

The Phoenix Theatre is, in the most part, self-sufficient, generating our income from theatre hire, professional split ticket deals, secondary sales, particularly the bar, and our own in-house productions (including our annual pantomime), but we do receive annual grant funding from Northumberland County Council. This funding, however, is reviewed on an annual basis and is not guaranteed, therefore other sources of funding are critical to the survival of the operation.

Alongside our professional programme, we actively support local artists, schools, groups and emerging talent, ensuring that the Theatre remains firmly connected to the community it serves.

Our Vision Statement

To provide a high quality, affordable, entertainment, educational and accessible venue that is inclusive, for all residents and visitors to Blyth and South East Northumberland, that is recognized as such both locally, regionally and nationally.

About the Area



“A town with a proud industrial heritage, a thriving coastal community and an exciting future”

Situated on the spectacular Northumberland coastline, Blyth is one of the region’s fastest evolving towns, combining a rich industrial heritage with an ambitious vision for the future. The nearest city (and airport), Newcastle-upon-Tyne, is only 25 minutes drive away and connectivity has only recently been enhanced further with the opening of the Northumberland Railway line.

The 2021 census highlighted a population of 39.73k, of which 97.3% identified with white ethnic groups and the average age being 40. The average house price is around £160k, which is almost 50% lower than the UK average.

The North-East has one of the UK’s most vibrant cultural sectors. Within easy reach of Blyth are several internationally recognised organisations, including the Glasshouse International Centre for Music, Newcastle Theatre Royal, Northern Stage, Live Theatre, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Dance City, The Laing Art Gallery, Woodhorn Museum and Alnwick Playhouse.

For generations, Blyth has played an important role in Britain’s maritime, mining and engineering history. Today, the town is undergoing one of the most significant regeneration programmes in the North-East with major investment in clean energy, education, housing and cultural development and the Phoenix is perfectly placed to play a leading role in this transformation.

One of Blyth’s greatest strengths is its people and the town is known for its warmth, resilience and strong sense of community – an aspect that the Phoenix is proud to be part of.

The Opportunity

This appointment offers an exciting and unique opportunity for an ambitious Executive Director to lead the Phoenix Theatre into the next stage of its development.

The successful candidate will build on the theatre's established success as an arts, entertainment and community organisation, strengthening its existing operations while identifying new opportunities to innovate, develop audiences, increase income, build partnerships and extend its reach and impact.

The Executive Director will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the Phoenix Theatre, providing strong strategic, operational and commercial leadership while working closely with the Board, staff, artists, partners and the wider community.

The Phoenix has a proud history spanning more than five decades, during which it has evolved through different identities, forms of theatre practice and approaches to community engagement. The new Executive Director will inherit a strong foundation and have the opportunity to shape the next chapter of that story.

This is an opportunity to preserve and build on what makes the Phoenix distinctive, while bringing fresh thinking, new ideas and an ambitious, sustainable vision for its future.

Operations, Buildings & Resources

The Phoenix Theatre operates from a distinctive red-brick facility nestled within a residential sector of the town. The current three-storey building, opened in 1996 and funded by the National Lottery, was erected on the site of a Methodist church, which had previously operated as a theatre until 1989.

Now over 30 years old, the building requires ongoing maintenance, investment and renewal to ensure that its infrastructure, facilities and equipment remain safe, efficient, fit for purpose and capable of meeting the needs of audiences, performers, staff and the wider community. Managing the long-term condition of the building and planning for the replacement and renewal of ageing infrastructure will therefore be an important part of the Theatre's future sustainability.

The building includes a 299-seater auditorium with full state-of-the-art sound and lighting equipment, plus a cinema screen and projection facilities for film screenings. Alongside the auditorium, there is a multi-purpose Studio, used for smaller-scale productions, rehearsal and dressing-room facilities, meeting rooms and other participatory events.

The bar and foyer areas (the latter of which houses the manned box office) can also be used for meetings, workshops and display areas.

The Theatre operates with a skilled and committed staff team across programming, marketing, day-to-day operations, customer service and administration. Technical support is currently delivered by experienced freelance operatives and front-of-house (including the bar) is serviced by a team of experienced volunteers.

They will also need to work closely with various key bodies, such as Northumberland County Council, promoters and producers, schools, local performing groups and community organisations.

The Role

The Executive Director is the senior executive leader of the Phoenix Theatre and is responsible for providing strategic, operational and financial leadership across the organisation.

Reporting directly to the Board of Trustees, the Executive Director will lead the Theatre through its next stage of development, ensuring it remains financially sustainable, artistically ambitious and firmly rooted within the community it serves.

The Executive Director will inspire staff, volunteers, Trustees and partners to deliver the Theatre's charitable missions, while identifying new opportunities for growth, innovation and collaboration.

This is a highly visible leadership role requiring exceptional judgement, strong commercial awareness and an unwavering commitment to public service.

The postholder will report to and be accountable to the Board of Trustees. Current direct reports include the Theatre Operations Manager and Box Office assistant, as well as overseeing the freelance technical and volunteer workforce.



Job Description

Responsible to: Board of Trustees, Phoenix Theatre

Overarching Responsibilities

- Lead the organisation on behalf of the Board of Trustees
- Deliver the Theatre's strategic objectives
- Ensure effective governance and regulatory compliance
- Protect and strengthen the Theatre's financial sustainability
- Champion artistic excellence and community engagement
- Build protective partnerships across the public, private and voluntary sectors
- Develop a high-performing organisational culture

Artistic and Programme Leadership

The Executive Director will work with the Board of Trustees to:

- Shape the Theatre's artistic direction
- Maintain a diverse and financially sustainable programme
- Oversee live entertainment and cinema
- Encourage innovation in programming
- Support community productions and participation
- Balance commercial performance with charitable objectives

Financial Leadership

The Executive Director will ensure robust financial controls and promote a culture of responsible management. This includes:

- Preparing annual budgets
- Monitoring financial performance
- Regular reporting to Trustees
- Developing long-term financial strategies
- Managing organisational resources effectively
- Ensuring value for money, particularly relating to engaging performers

Fundraising & Business Development

The Executive Director will lead the Theatre's fundraising and income generation activity. This includes:

- Developing fundraising strategies
- Preparing grant applications
- Building relationships with trusts, foundations and other potential fund donors
- Developing sponsorship opportunities
- Identifying business opportunities

Operations and Facilities

The Executive Director will ensure that the Theatre remains safe, welcoming and fit for future generations. This includes:

- Building management, including Health and Safety
- Security
- Technical operations
- Licensing compliance
- Managing performers' contracts
- Accessibility
- Environmental sustainability
- Front of House operations (including Duty Management and Box Office cover)
- Capital improvements

People Leadership

The Executive Director will create a culture where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute. This includes:

- Recruit motivate and retain talented staff (employed and volunteer)
- Promote professional development
- Lead performance management
- Develop succession and workforce planning
- Encourage wellbeing
- Foster an inclusive and respectful workplace
- Develop and ensure effective communication channels

Marketing and Audience Development

The Executive Director will develop strategies to:

- Develop audience growth and increase attendance
- Improve customer loyalty
- Strengthen digital engagement
- Enhance the Theatre's public profile
- Promote the Phoenix brand
- Build strong relationships with media and stakeholders

Governance and Compliance

The Executive Director will support the Board of Trustees in maintaining the highest standards of governance and transparency. This includes:

- Charities Commission requirements
- Companies House obligations
- Employment legislation
- Health and Safety legislation
- Data Protection
- Equality legislation
- Safeguarding responsibilities
- Licensing regulations
- Financial regulations



Community

The Executive Director should play an active role in the cultural life of Blyth and South-East Northumberland, contributing to regional developments. This includes:

- Building and sustaining strong relationships with community partners, audiences, artistes, schools and local organisations
- Champion access, participation and inclusion across the theatre's activities, balancing community values with the organisation's long-term sustainability
- Support and encourage creative participation across the region, helping individuals and organisations to engage with programmes and opportunities

External Relations

As the senior representative of the Phoenix Theatre Blyth, the Executive Director will:

- Represent the Theatre publicly
- Develop strategic partnerships
- Advocate for arts and culture
- Build relationships with funders
- Strengthen civic partnerships
- Develop regional and national networks
- Promote the Theatre's networks

Success in the First 12 Months

During the first year, we would expect the successful candidate to:

- Build strong relationships with staff, volunteers and Trustees
- Gain a comprehensive understanding of the organisation
- Develop a refreshed strategic plan
- Identify opportunities for organisational growth
- Strengthen external partnerships
- Review commercial opportunities
- Develop a fundraising strategy
- Enhance organisational resilience
- Improvement audience development
- Establish themselves as a respected leader within the cultural sector
- Manage the Phoenix within set budgets
- Hit all performance targets



Person Specification

We are looking for an exceptional leader with the vision to inspire, the commercial acumen to grow the organisation and the passion to ensure the Phoenix Theatre Blyth remains at the heart of the community.

Essential Experience

The successful candidate should be able to demonstrate substantial experience in the following areas of leadership:

- Strategy
- Finance
- People management
- Programming
- Operations and Facilities
- Fundraising & Business Development

Desirable Experience

In addition, we would welcome anyone with experience in any of the following areas:

- Marketing and Audience development
- Governance and Compliance
- Partnership Working

Skills and Abilities

The Executive Director should be able to demonstrate outstanding ability in:

- Leadership
- Communication
- Commercial Awareness
- Relationship building

Qualifications

Essential

- Degree level qualification or equivalent professional experience
- Evidence of continuing professional development
- At least 5 years' relevant senior management experience in theatre, arts, culture or related sector
- Demonstrate experience of managing people, budgets and day to day operations
- Experience of strategic planning, income generation and partnership development

Desirable

- 7-10 years' experience in theatre or wider culture sector
- Previous experience at Executive Director, General Manager, Theatre Manager or compatible senior level
- Experience of finance and budget management
- An understanding charity governance
- Experience of fund raising, grant applications and developing sustainable income streams



Terms of Appointment

Salary	£40,000 - £48,000 per annum (dependent on experience, plus pension)
Hours	40 hours per week
Working pattern	The nature of the role requires flexibility, including regular evening and weekend working to support the theatre programme. Time off in lieu will be available, in accordance with theatre policy
Contract	Full-time, Permanent
Holidays	25 days per annum, plus statutory bank holidays
Base	Phoenix Theatre, Beaconsfield Street, Blyth
Probation / notice	The post will be subject to a 6-month probationary and notice period

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The Phoenix Theatre Blyth is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion. We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds and are committed to creating a workforce that reflects the communities we serve.

How to Apply

Please submit a current CV and covering letter (no more than two A4 pages), setting out why you are interested in the role and how your experience meets the job description and person specification.

Applications should either be emailed to recruitment@thephoenixtheatre.org.uk or posted to Recruitment, The Phoenix Theatre, 37a Beaconsfield Street, Blyth, Northumberland, NE24 2DS

Deadline for applications: By 5.00 p.m. on Friday 11 September 2026

Interview: Following a short-listing process undertaken by the selection panel, successful candidates will be invited to an in-person interview **week commencing 14 September 2026.**

NB Please let us know at the point of application if you are not available during the interview week.

PHOENIX THEATRE • BLYTH