

North Yorkshire Council

Scarborough and Whitby Area Committee

29 November 2024

Scarborough Open Air Theatre Performance Report 2024

Report of the Corporate Director Community Development

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report provides an overview of the impact of the 2024 season at Scarborough Open Air Theatre

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 The report provides the following information regarding the performance and impact of the Scarborough Open Air Theatre in 2024

- Background information
- Review of the 2024 season
- Number of tickets sold split into travel duration.
- Estimated economic benefit.
- Additional spending
- Other events within the venue

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Scarborough's Open Air Theatre was built by Scarborough Corporation in the 1930's. The Lord Mayor of London opened the Open Air Theatre in Northstead Manor Gardens in 1932, and audiences flocked to see 'Merrie England', the first production to be staged at the outdoor venue.

3.2 Following its closure in 1986 Scarborough Borough Council invested £3.5m in restoring the venue, commencing works in 2009. Following a major refurbishment, the late HM The Queen accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh officially opened the newly refurbished Scarborough Open Air Theatre on 20 May 2010.

3.3 Since its official re-opening, the Scarborough OAT has played host to some of the music industry's biggest stars, including Elton John, Britney Spears, Gary Barlow, Kylie, Noel Gallagher, Lionel Richie, Nile Rodgers & CHIC, Biffy Clyro, Little Mix, Lewis Capaldi, Christina Aguilera, Tom Jones, Bryan Adams, Hollywood Vampires, Pulp, Blondie, Rag n Bone Man and many more. Sales have shown an upward trend with 2024 breaking all records for season sales.

4.0 REVIEW OF THE 2024 SEASON & ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 In 2024 there were 18 concerts at Scarborough Open Air Theatre with attendances reaching 116,606. This is the highest number of tickets sold for a single season of concerts at the Open Air Theatre since reopening.

4.2 A standard methodology to estimate the economic benefit of the venue has been used for a number of years and has been adapted to reflect the increased knowledge around people's habits when attending a show. The methodology is based on assumptions about likely behaviour in terms of day trips v overnight stays as shown in the table below:-

Duration of Travel in hours	% of ticket sales that stayed 1 night	% of ticket sales that returned home
Up to 1 hours	10	90
1-2 hours	20	80
2-3 hours	50	50
3-4 hours	70	30
over 4 hours	100	0

4.3 In 2024, having fully analysed Post Code Data from Ticketmaster the following durations of travel have been established for concert attendees.

Duration of Travel	Tickets Sold
0 - 1 hours	35,551
1 - 2 hours	40,950
2 - 3 hours	31,062
3 - 4 hours	2,636
Over 4 hours	6,407
Total Tickets	116,606

4.4 Applying the assumptions based on travel time and using the STEAM data for calculating the value, shows an estimated value of the Open Air Theatre to the local economy in excess of £8.5million as shown in the table below. It is important to note that these figures do not take into account the cost of ticket sales or spend per head when inside the venue.

Duration of Travel in hours	% of ticket sales that stayed 1 night	% of ticket sales that returned home	Tickets per band	STEAM Spend Data	Total Value of Concerts
Up to 1 hours	10		3,555	£114.43	£406,798.65
		90	31,996	£54.72	£1,750,821.12
1-2 hours	20		8,190	£114.43	£937,181.70
		80	32,760	£54.72	£1,792,627.20
2-3 hours	50		15,531	£114.43	£1,777,212.33
		50	15,531	£54.72	£849,856.32
3-4 hours	70		1,845	£114.43	£211,123.35
		30	791	£54.72	£43,283.52

over 4 hours	100		6,407	£114.43	£733,153.01
		0	0	£54.72	£0.00
			116,606		£8,502,057.20

4.5 The Open Air Theatre is now becoming one of the more attractive medium sized venues on the music touring circuit regularly attracting arena style acts through the partnership arrangement with Cuffe and Taylor (part of the Live Nation family). This brings wider benefits to the local area and economy, including:

- Tourism benefits from the shows themselves and also generating new visits and repeat visits to the local region.

In addition, clear benefits are evident in a number of private sectors such as

- Hotels, B&B's and Guest House – many reports that they are full as soon as shows are announced in addition there are some establishments that offer a minimum 2-night stays on concert nights.
- Local Public House – report the significant increase in customers on show nights.
- Taxis – using the dedicated pick-up area are heavily utilised.
- Buses – Shoreline Sun cruisers run a number of services after the shows.
- Local Eateries / Takeaways – extremely busy around the town
- Backstage Catering and Supplies – all artist riders for the season have been purchased from local supermarkets.
- Local Catering Company – a local catering company are employed to provide food on all show days for the artist and crews.

4.6 There are also other very significant contributions made to employment in the area directly from the OAT. Each year (2024 figures) we spend money on the following.

- Electrical works (£10,000)
- Security, Safety & Medical Teams (£299,193)
- Toilet hire (£77,250)
- Box Office Staff (£45,000)
- Noise Monitoring Staff (£25,110)
- Local Catering Concessions (on show nights)

4.7 The following groups of people are employed at the venue by contractors.

- Bar & Catering staff – the majority are local. (£370k)
- Local Crew and riggers (£225K)
- Agents and Promoters and associated hotel stays. (£65,000)

4.8 In addition Scarborough Open Air Theatre will once again host Scarborough Sparkle. A 3-day Christmas Market at the venue which has grown year on year in both size and attendances. This well received event is now a regular feature on the calendar as the area prepares for Christmas attracting audiences of around 25,000 each year.

4.9 Throughout the winter the venue also hosts Scarborough's unique 'The Tipi Venue' offering weddings, Oktoberfest, parties and other functions throughout the winter months.

4.10 In 2025, building on the success of Scarborough Sparkle Christmas Market we will also be hosting a Scarborough Food and Drink Festival on 12 & 13 April.

5.0 CONTRIBUTION TO COUNCIL PRIORITIES

5.1 AS a vibrant cultural venue, the Open Air Theatre contributes to the Council Plan Priority “Economy”, The venue supports tourism and wider economic benefits for the area, supporting local businesses and employing local people.

6.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 There are no alternative options to consider from this report as it provides information only.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The budget for the operation of the Open Air Theatre for 2024/25 is £171,500. However, the forecast after Q2 is of a spend of £135,021 against budget. Therefore, an underspend of £36,479. This forecast includes an estimated figure for the annual profit share that is due to the Council as part of the contract with Live Nation. This figure has not yet been finalised and is likely to be more than the estimate included in Q2 reporting. Therefore, the overall cost of the venue will reduce further once this has been finalised.

	Budget	Forecast	Variance
Operating Costs			
Staff Costs	36,900	37,418	518
Energy & Rates	69,300	69,900	600
Maintenance	60,000	65,000	5,000
Event costs	486,600	527,521	40,921
Other Misc	68,400	73,940	5,540
Total	721,200	773,779	52,579
Income			
Rent and Lettings Income	-408,700	-408,700	0
Event Income	-141,000	-230,058	-89,058
Total	-549,700	-638,758	-89,058
TOTAL	171,500	135,021	-36,479

7.2 The table above shows the current forecast for the current year and highlights the expectation that the costs of the OAT will come in under budget, with a £36k saving. This is as a result of increased income and ticket sales. Whilst the higher levels of attendance have also increased costs (for example around security) this is more than offset by the increased income derived from ticket sales and other income.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report as it provides information only.

9 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report. The Venue strives to provide an accessible experience and in October 2023 were proud to have been

awarded the **silver** level of Attitude is Everything's Live Events Access Charter for 2023-2025, demonstrating our commitment to improving the live music experience for our disabled audiences, artists, and team.

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The venue works closely with Live Nation and their Green Nation charter, with a target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030 and ending the sale of single-use plastics at all owned and operated venues and festivals by 2021.

Their agreed position across the world is to reduce the negative environmental impacts often associated with live events including waste generation and single-use plastics, energy and water use, transport and food sourcing.

11.0 CONCLUSIONS

11.1 The Open Air Theatre is a respected music venue, delivering world class acts, through the partnership with Cuffe and Taylor (as part of the live nation family). The contribution to the local region is significant and continuing to grow with increasing attendances year on year.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

i) To note the impact and performance of the Open Air Theatre. .

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Open Air Theatre Timeline
Appendix B – Social Media Overview
Appendix C – Ticket Sales Year on Year

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Ticketmaster sales reporting information

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17 November 2024

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Presenter of Report – *Stuart Clark, Head of Venues and Attractions*

Note: Members are invited to contact the author in advance of the meeting with any detailed queries or questions.

PLEASE ALSO NOTE THAT IF ANY REPORTS / APPENDICES INCLUDE SIGNATURES THESE MUST BE REMOVED / DELETED PRIOR TO SENDING REPORTS / APPENDICES TO DEMOCRATIC SERVICES. Appendices should include an Equality Impact Assessment and a Climate Impact Assessment where appropriate.

APPENDIX A

Scarborough Open Air Theatre Timeline

- **1930's** – Built by Scarborough Corporation
- **1932** – Opened by the Lord Mayor of London
- **1968** - Musicals ceased after 'West Side Story' apart from a YMCA production in 1982.
- **1986** - James Last performs last Show at Scarborough Open Air Theatre
- **2009** - Scarborough Council embark on a £3.5m restoration project.
- **20 May 2010** - Open Air Theatre is Officially opened by HM The Queen
- **23 July 2010** -The Gala Opening featuring Dame Kiri Te Kanawa and Jose Carreras marks the start of a new chapter in the venues history
- **2010** - the Open Air Theatre hosted 6 acts, attracting 15,068 concert-goers
- **21 June 2011** – Elton John performs to 7,500 people with the lake covered temporarily to increase capacity for this show
- **18 June 2012** - The Olympic Torch passes through the Venue on the way to London 2012
- **2017** - Scarborough Council enter into a partnership agreement with Cuffe and Taylor
- **30 July 2016** - Wet Wet Wet perform 50th show at the Open Air Theatre
- **2017** - part of the lake in front of the stage is filled in increasing the capacity from 5454 to 8,500
- **24 May 2017** - Beach Boys concert takes place - 2 days after the tragic events at Manchester Arena
- **2017** – full season sales exceed 75,000 for the first time
- **2018** – Cuffe and Taylor became part of the Live Nation family
- **2018** onwards - the council embark on a continual improvement programme working with Counter Terrorism Advisors to protect the venue and concert goers.
- **2018** – 17 August Britney Spears performs at Scarborough OAT attracting worldwide media coverage
- **2020** - whole season lost to the Covid 19 pandemic
- **14 August 2021** - 100th event at the venue featuring Culture Club
- **2023** – Season ticket sales exceed 100,000 for the first time
- **1 July 2024** – 150th event featuring Gregory Porter
- **2024** – recorded sales of over 116,000 people attending 18 shows

APPENDIX B

Scarborough Open Air Theatre Timeline social media and Marketing information 2024

The following information has been provided by Live Nation and is a reflection of the Marketing activity in terms of editorial pieces, Social Media reach and Live Nations general activity where Open Air Theatre is included.

Media Reach

783 editorial pieces published.
84.14 million audience reach

Social Media

5.6k new followers since 13th October 2023
3.8 million reach on Facebook in the last 12 months

637k views in the last 90 days & 11.3k interactions on Instagram

Marketing Comms from LN

Average weekly LN UK digital channel reach: 9.3million
Annual users of LN.co.uk (2023): 16million
Average weekly social channel reach: 5.3million
Average weekly CRM channel reach: 3.8million Active CRM audience: 4.4million • Weekly newsletter subscribers: 2million

In addition, there have been numerous comments on social media sites or direct to the venue from artists. A snapshot of some from 2024 are below.

“This is SKA-borough. It’s so lovely to see you all. Isn’t it great” Suggs - Madness

“Scarborough, thank you so much for coming out tonight, it’s so beautiful to see you all... here I am with my own show and you guys have sold it out. Thank you for supporting live music”
Becky Hill

“This is our very last show of the summer so its going to be a big one. Come on Scarborough”
Busted

“Brilliant to see you all here - what a great place. We’ve been here a few times and its very nice to be back. This is one of the nicest venues in England and we love coming here” Francis Rossi
- Status Quo

APPENDIX C

Scarborough Open Air Theatre Ticket Sales Year on Year

Year	Shows	Tickets	Average per show
2010	6	15,068	2511
2011	6	12,264	2044
2012	6	16,894	2816
2013	8	24,998	3125
2014	10	30,383	3038
2015	11	35,824	3257
2016	10	48,861	4886
2017	14	74,096	5293
2018	16	91,431	5714
2019	10	62,645	6265
2020	Season Cancelled due to Pandemic		
2021	12	71,846	5987
2022	15	91,605	6107
2023	18	104,381	5799
2023	18	116,606	6478
TOTALS	160	796,902	

