

Highlands and Islands Theatre Network

Business Plan Outline 2005 - 2008

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1. Background information

The Highlands & Islands Theatre Network (HITN) was set up as an informal grouping by 1997 and has the agreed aim, to:

- Promote the professional theatre sector in the Highlands and Islands at regional, national and international levels.

It has over 20 member companies, ranging from some long established, some new, which deliver a range of activities such as new work (including writing and touring product), educational work, dance, community plays, multi media projects, formal educational courses, Actors masterclasses, special needs, international work, theatre in education, large scale celebrations and site specific performances.

The HITN is about to become a formal organisation (Company Limited by Guarantee with charitable status) to provide an identifiable mechanism for contact and communication, advocacy and advice in order to develop a sustainable sector, which takes into account the sparse population and geographical challenges faced by the HITN members.

Members need support on a variety of levels to allow any consistency of development and sustainability. The New Company has been set up to establish structures which will allow all the network companies access to support and potential areas of enhancement, training and individual development.

- Companies need more opportunities for basis for collaboration, both among each other and with other national and International practitioners to allow development of individuals and collective work
- Members will benefit from assistance with accessing funds
- Members will benefit from assistance to capitalise on existing opportunities
- Members will benefit from assistance with project management and project evaluation and audience monitoring.
- Members will benefit from assistance with project marketing/ branding/ advertising.

The Network will initially undertake the following four projects in support and development of the companies -

- Northern Periphery collaborative project with Norway and Sweden
- Festival of Highland Theatre 2007
- Marketing Support Initiatives
- Theatre Masterclass Training programme

Current market position for Theatre Development in the Highlands and Islands

The current market position for Theatre in the Highlands and Islands is healthier than ever before, with major new venues emerging – including the new An Lanntair Arts Centre opening in Stornoway in October 2005, the new theatre planned for Wick, and the planned renovations of Eden Court Theatre

Over the last few years many rural venues and halls have benefited from upgrading so there are now more better-quality venues for theatre available. Development of the Promoters Arts Network (PAN) and input of funding support from the Scottish Arts Council and other public funders has meant that there are greater numbers of voluntary and professional promoters who have a commercial need and genuine interest in promoting indigenous theatre.

The current situation is also encouraging in that there are now substantially more companies – from eleven member companies being represented at the second meeting of HITN in 1997, there are now twenty producing companies.

However trends are changing in terms of nature of work and needs of developing audiences. Theatre companies are drawn by the nature of funding currently available to commission new writing or look at methods of devising new work rather than produce existing texts. Many audiences experience of Highland and Island work is very often of the new work which has not been reviewed and where an element of chance exist. They do not fully know what the product is.

Some developing audiences in the Western Isles and Skye have developed selective interests, they like work to be produced about their own community history or current cultures. Large audiences can be achieved for the community play or professional historical issue play. These audiences will not necessarily attend visiting work of Central Belt touring companies despite reputation or regularity of touring.

2. Aims and Objectives –

The Highland Theatre Network (HTN) recognises the particular nature of the Highlands and Islands, a region the size of Belgium. It celebrates its special cultural history, creative opportunities and wide variety of social and geographical potentialities and difficulties. HTN seeks to provide a means for theatre artists to share experience, ideas and creativity across their wide region for the benefit of their audiences, their communities and the arts of theatre in general. It does so by addressing the specific nature of the region in which its members work and drawing on that to explore and expand the vision of theatre within and beyond their region to promote the professional theatre sector in the Highlands and Islands at regional, national and international levels

Following consultation, to represent members' interests at conferences, public forum and with other organisations and to report back to members

To develop and maintain relationships on behalf of members with the private sector and with EU departments and organisations

To maintain relevant information on the current funding criteria in the public sector and with private trusts and foundations

To encourage best practice among members by enabling access to training and current legislation

To develop unique projects, including training to support the promotion and artistic development of network members in a National and International context.

To work with other organisations to encourage wider access to theatre across the Highlands and Islands area.

3. Structure of organisation

Board of Directors -

Six proposed independent members drawn from the communities or individuals based outwith the area who have stakeholding in developing arts provision or theatre in the North,

2 elected members from membership (on annual rotation),

Ordinary Members will include -

- Theatre Companies based in the Region
- Theatre producing and receiving Houses like Eden Court Theatre, Pitlochry Festival Theatre.
- Individual professional artists

Member representation on Board of Directors will be at least 25% and not more than 33%

Annual Membership fee of £50.

Board Members

Ian Brown: Theatre Training and Development consultant; former Professor of Drama and Dean of Arts, Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh; Playwright.

Lara Macdonald Administrator Dogstar Theatre Company, (Theatre Companies Rep).

John McGeoch Arts Manager, Arts in Motion, Evanton, (Theatre Companies Rep).

Dolina MacLennan Western Isles originated Gaelic Theatre, Film and TV actress and writer/playwright.

Sandy Anderson Arts Development consultant Highlands, Chairman of PAN.

One member from Arts in Business and one other.

Patron: Muriel Romanes, Artistic Director and Actress with Stellar Quines Theatre Company Edinburgh.

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4. Company operation - the first three years and beyond

How company will function over three year period / potential targets and achievements.

The Company employees in place will deliver the following aspects:-

- Fundraising for Network projects
- Initialising and running Network projects
- Fundraising backup – providing and updating databases specific to needs of Highland and Island Company's.
- Development and delivery of advancement training programmes in all theatre disciplines.
- Collaboration with Scottish National Theatre
- Developing and updating website with members information
- Continuing the development of collaborations with PAN promoters
- Management backup for Companies, information on theatre company policy and management

Board of Directors overseeing Network management and running of the network Company

Board of Directors supporting Network and members initiatives and advising and assisting with any difficulties if required

Targets:

Year 1 - 2005/2006

- Have established an international collaborative project between Network and Companies in Norway and Sweden.
- Be sourcing and delivering appropriate professional training
- Be delivering marketing support
- Beginning to raise the profile of H & I companies
- Be working towards a Festival of Highlands and Island Theatre 2007

Year 2 - 2006/2007

- Have helped increase the amount of theatre projects funded in the Region
- Increase the number of network companies touring abroad
- Be working towards a Festival of Highlands and Island Theatre
- Achieving marketing support through collective distribution programme
- Have made major inroads into advocacy for Highlands and Islands work in national context
- Be realising an international collaborative Project.
- Be sourcing and delivering appropriate professional training

Year 3 - 2007/2008

- Have realised a Festival of Highlands and Islands Theatre
- Have an established marketing support system
- Be developing further International collaborative work
- Have strengthened infrastructure of existing companies
- Be sourcing and delivering appropriate professional training

5. Projects proposed by the Network

5.1. Northern Periphery Collaborative project proposal

Northern Theatre Connection (provisional title) - a touring theatre collaboration project in the Northern Periphery

The project has emerged as a result of identifying common difficulties for creating and touring theatre in rural and remote areas. (in Scotland and Europe).....

The project aims to develop the quality and diversity of theatre created in rural and remote areas by looking at good practice in theatre development in each partner country. Bringing practitioners of each country together to work on a collaborative development of a unique theatre touring project which would have a universal appeal in each partner country.

The project aims to assemble groups of artists in each country and, over a two year period, focus on research, identifying good practice and innovation in theatre work, audience development and establishing relevancy of product.

Objectives:

- To encourage the transfer of good practice for theatre development that will aim to sustain the production and long term development of theatre in rural areas in each partner country.
- To encourage and improve the confidence of theatre artists based in each of the partner areas and to work co-operatively and develop new skills.
- To produce a piece of theatre which will be performed in each partner country.
- To produce a research document that will record and promote good practice.
- To promote the work of theatre artists in the partner areas and the achievements of the project to a wide audience in both the Northern Periphery and in core regions of Europe.

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Partners:

Scotland Highland and Island Theatre Network, Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Norway Possibly Beavvas Sami Theahter and TeatreNOR

Sweden Profiltatern and Robert Herrala at Projektledare, Vasterbottensteatern

Notes:

Contribute to the European debate on cultural diversity.

Project could tackle issues relating to emigration from rural and remote communities, cultural diversity in resettlement of rural areas.

Strengthen theatre development and sustainability.....

Regions that suffer similar challenges in terms of audience development.....

The theatre project needs to have a common starting point, a common conclusion and relevancy for each partner country.....

Reaffirming a positive image of theatre produced in rural and remote areas and developed from the specific communities.

5.2 Festival of Theatre in the Highlands 2007

The Highlands and Islands Theatre Festival (HITF) is a proposed unique Festival, celebrating the wealth and diversity of high quality contemporary theatre and dance from rural cultures featuring the work of National companies, visiting International companies and Highland and Island producing companies as part of the Scottish Year of Highland Culture in 2007.

The proposed timing would be in September 2007 and would include a Forum, Masterclasses and open Workshops for the interchange of ideas and sharing of experiences.

A working group has been set up, reporting to the HITN Board and Members. This group, the Festival Implementation Group (FIG), is made up of the following participants:

HITN Members: Ian Brown (HITN Chair and Chair of FIG), Dolina MacLennan (HITN Board Member), Matthew Zajac/Hamish MacDonald (Dogstar Theatre Company), George Gunn (Grey Coast Theatre Company), Simon MacKenzie (TOSG).

Observers: representatives from each of the following bodies – Eden Court Theatre, National Theatre of Scotland (NToS), HI~Arts, Highland 2007, The Playwrights Studio.

Vision:

“Celebrating the best of today’s theatre in the Highlands and Islands; offering a forum to learn, create and debate.”

Aim 1:

“To celebrate, share and promote the highest quality theatre and build links between the Highlands and Islands and national and international practitioners”

Aim 2:

“To create opportunities for the involvement of the wider communities, including young people and children.”

Aim 3:

“To provide an environment for Scotland’s theatre community to learn, debate, innovate and create.”

5.3 Marketing Support Projects

Network would develop specific projects to make impact in terms of Marketing, these may include:-

- DVD produced annually featuring video clips of the professional companies product for the year. Development of promotional powerpoint for presentation at events, press conferences etc.
- Development of the Website. Although currently the HITN Website is part of the Hi - Arts site and for the next year this may prove to be the most effective way to operate. However the existing site does require updating and developing. However as projects come on stream it may be advantageous to develop our own site, reinforcing the Network branding and the marketing of the companies.
- Development of a collaborative Marketing distribution programme that supports what is in place with local promoters and companies themselves, but is an inter-agency and inter-organisation collaboration aiming to give blanket Marketing across the Highlands and Islands, across Scotland and beyond.
- To develop one off specific marketing initiatives which promote the work of the network companies. Video or television promotions - adverts, tasters, billboard advertising and other high profile presentations.

5.4 Theatre Masterclass Training Programme

This programme would bring into the Highlands and Islands internationally recognised theatre practitioners to present intensive weekend training programmes in all theatre disciplines with the aim of

- To encourage experimentation by Northern based artists
- To encourage opportunities for collaborations and dissemination of ideas
- To bring other artists into the region for short periods - assert idea of Highlands as place to experience, conducive learning environments.
- Events would utilise and put more theatre related events into our training centres, (Sabhal Mor Ostaig, Northern College, Lionacleit Community School, etc) as well as utilising some of the recently developed Highland venues and creative spaces such as the Evanton resource (Arts in Motion)
- Encourage the wider theatre community to view the Highlands as a potential enclave for creativity.

This project will be developed in association with other National agencies who regularly bring International practitioners to Britain, Organisations like International Workshop Festival and Centre of Performance Research (Aberystwyth). Contact has already been made with these organisations with the view of linking in to proposed events potential routes of collaboration are currently being negotiated.

Other National based tutors and practitioners interested in delivering intensive training workshops in the Highlands include, John Wright, Jos Houben, Mark Rylance and Frankie Armstrong. Montreal based practitioner Oleg Kissilov would also be interested workshops in the Highlands, (recently working with Stellar Quines in Edinburgh).

6. Advocacy Role of the Network

Ongoing advocacy for the network companies, with Cultural Commission or equivalent, at local authority level, with local MPs/MSPs, at Scottish Executive level and at national theatre marketing events throughout Britain.

Network companies will be represented consistently at FST meetings and at the PAN forum and at ITC.

The Network needs to ensure that theatre artists in each region can feed into policy making for the theatre Sector at local agency, Local Authority, Local Enterprise and National Agency levels.

The Advocacy role will be undertaken primarily by Network Officers and individual Board Members

7. Marketing

7.1 Marketing Strategy

The Theatre Network would want to achieve major branding of Highlands and Islands Touring Theatre on a National basis by 2007.

Initial marketing targets

Initial marketing targets would include -

- development of local audiences
- wider promotions for the performances when the work is in the Central Belt or outwith the Highlands and Islands

By the time of the Highlands & Islands Theatre Festival in 2007 the Theatre Network would aim to have created a discernible impact.

The products on offer – as far as the Theatre Network is concerned, it is marketing high-quality indigenous touring theatre, dance and combined arts projects produced by the network member companies.

In the short term the Network would undertake to develop an ongoing research process including a series of generic audience questionnaires for Companies to use in order to assess responses to indigenous work both from our local audiences but also from Central Belt and international audiences.

Long term marketing targets

Long term marketing targets would include making inroads into National and International promotions.

ie; Seeing companies invited to national and International Festivals

There is considerably greater commercial funding available for international touring, making this an attractive market to break into in the longer term. However, since the international promoters are spoilt for choice, they will only buy the work if it is hyped up and recognised as being “the best out of Scotland” in a particular genre. But to be sold abroad, Scottish work has to be seen to be valued by the Scottish community.

7.2 Marketing Plan

The Marketing Methods proposed initially are as set out in the three projects mentioned earlier in section 5.3 – an annual DVD, development of the HITN website, development of a collaborative Marketing distribution programme and development of one off high profile marketing initiatives.

These are separate projects which will require outsourcing as necessary and will probably require separate funding applications (which would be undertaken by Theatre Network staff).

The HITN Board of Directors will have overall responsibility for monitoring and reviewing progress. Theatre Network officers would monitor audiences through the questionnaires to assess the success of the marketing strategies – using the generic audience monitoring form to standardise feedback across the regions.

8. Employees and network management

The Management Team running the Network will consist of the two Network officers, monitored by the HITN Board of Directors. The Network officer(s) will be employed on a jobshare basis, with a total budget to allow the equivalent of four days work per week.

The main projects such as the Festival of Highland Theatre will have their own budget and administration, with the network officers having a supervisory and enabling role. The smaller-scale projects will be managed by the Network officers directly.

This document proceeds on the basis that the workload is split across two people, each working approximately 2 days per week, one based in an office in Inverness and one working from home.

In general it would make sense that most information dispersal/marketing was undertaken by the office-based person, and that the home-worker would undertake most of the development work, although there would of course be considerable room for crossover between the two roles. It would naturally make sense for the Inverness-based person to attend the majority of FST meetings and other national events as this would help minimise travelling time and expense.

It would naturally be left to the HITN Board of Directors to determine the appropriate monitoring and co-ordinating techniques which it thought would work best. However it would be normal to produce a detailed workplan in advance setting out what each officer has to achieve in each year. Officers would report on progress and answer questions at the bi-monthly board meetings.

9. Funding sources and financial stability

Highlands and Islands Theatre Network Budget			
Expenditure	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Board Members Travel Expenses	700	750	800
Company Running costs			
Post / Administrator (4 days per wk possible job share)	15000	15500	16000
Employers NIC (based on 2 Part time posts)	600	620	640
Travel & Accommodation	3000	3200	3400
Office Resources	1500	1550	1600
Telephone	1500	1500	1500
Insurance	400	400	400
Website/Broadband	500	500	500
Office Space Hire	1800	1900	2000
Equipment	500	480	460
Accountancy Charity Accounts	1200	1300	1400
Total	26,700	27,700	28,700

HITN Budget**INCOME**

	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008
Members income @ £50 per	900	1,000	1,100
SAC	10,000	10,400	10,800
Highlands and Island Enterprise	10,000	10,400	10,800
Highland Council	1,500	1,500	1,500
3 Islands Councils @ £500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Moray Council	500	500	500
Hi-Arts help in Kind	2,300	2,400	2,500
Total	26,700	27,700	28,700

10. Attachments

- Information on Board Members

- Outline of nature and work by Member Theatre Companies

- **Arts in Motion** - Evanton, Ross. Arts in Motion are an independent multi-arts and media company specialising in public and performance work.
- **Theatre Hebrides** – Isle of Lewis, commissioning and producing new theatre from Western Isles issues, both historical and contemporary, & workshop programmes.
- **Grey Coast Theatre Company** – Caithness, touring theatre and community Projects, formal education courses.
- **Out of Darkness** – Elgin, special needs
- **Right Lines** – Alves, Right Lines is a writer led company that is committed to producing accessible, quality entertainment in the Highlands and internationally.
- **Dog Star** – Beaulay, New writing, Touring theatre
- **Adventurers Unlimited** – Fearn, work pan-Highland and elsewhere. Education, youth activities, tourism, training. Sustainable unsupported by arts funders.
- **theatrecollective@highland** – Inverness, commissioned new ensemble work, company collaborations and touring on Highland themes
- **Tosg** – Skye, Gaelic language theatre
- **Mull Theatre** – new writing and range of touring theatre,
- **Ballet West** – Argyll based
- **Plan B** – Conon Bridge, Contemporary dance
- **Dannsa** – Conon Bridge, traditional dance forms touring and teaching
- **Roadrunner-** Childrens Theatre
- **Goode for a Giggle** – Culbokie, Murder Mystery entertainments
- **Tartan Chameleon** – Cawdor, Touring theatre, International artists
- **Charioteer Theatre Company** - Forres- A public service to culture with the aim to promote theatre and restore the classics.
- **Skeklers** - Shetland
- **Tabula Rasa**
- **DogDaze** - Moray. Under the auspices of the Arts Development Team in Moray Council. Theatre for children and young people.

- Solicitors details:

Stronachs, 46 Church Street, Inverness, IV1 1EH