



# Volunteer update

Spring 2019

## **Welcome**

This is just a little attempt to keep all of our fantastic volunteers up to date with the fast moving changes and improvements to the Seagull. We know that it can be really hard to keep everyone up to speed and we really appreciate the time and effort everyone gives to keep the place running – so this update is a small step towards more communication.

## **Building Updates**

As you may have noticed we have continued to refurbish and upgrade the building through the winter and spring.

Here are the highlights :

### **Studio 3**

Having reinstated the rear windows, we have now fitted lovely new curtains (thanks to FW Knights). The large ugly floodlights have been removed and new led lights now hang from the ceiling (thanks to Carl Baker at Epic Electrical)

There is some touching up to do where the old lights have left holes and marks – but apart from that Studio 3 refurbishment is now complete !

### **Studio 1**

Studio 1 refurbishment continues. The holes in the ceiling and the crumbling plaster have been re-plastered (thanks to Richard Parker Hodds) – this is now ready for redecoration.

### **Studio 1 Annex**

The small area between Studio 1 and Studio 3 which includes the current children's costume store and old tech box has been renovated with the large broken window being boxed in (thanks to Steve Gooch) and is now being repainted (thanks to Malcolm Swann) In the future we hope to install some music technology equipment into this space.

**Ladies Toilets**

The cisterns in these toilets have been refurbished so that they now flush properly !!!

**Electrics**

The lights have been fixed in a number of places through the building including the studio staircase and mens loo's. New electrical sockets have also been fitted in Studio 2 and Studio 3. (thanks to Carl Baker at Epic Electrical)

**New Office Space**

The upstairs office space has been expanded with the old material room being converted into additional office and hot-desk space.

**Improvements at the Hut**

Our wonderful friends at the Menshed are also continuing with the renovation of the Hut. The upstairs studio space is being transformed into our new extra costumes and wardrobe room – since we are running out of space in the current one!

**Upcoming Works**

In the next few weeks we have the following works planned

- New Rear Auditorium doors – these will no longer need to be closed with a bit of rope !
- New door into the Tech Box – finally we will be able to access the Tech Box without going outside.
- New Fire Exit door from the backstage kitchen – this faulty door will be replaced.
- Air Conditioning – The Auditorium will be getting air conditioning and heating similar to that fitted in studio 1

**Longer Term**

In the longer term we also now have quotes for the full replacement of the Theatre stage with a proper sprung floor.

**Seagull Rep**

As you may have seen in the newspapers, the rebirth of the Seagull Rep continues apace. We have received funding from the Arts Council to put on a professional rural tour of the production of "Hound of the Baskervilles" which we developed at the Seagull last year.

This will be a fully professional production which will cement the Seagull Rep's position as the only professional Theatre Company based in Lowestoft. The Rep will continue to lead community "non professional" productions in the Seagull, but our touring performances here on, will be fully professional commercially developed pieces of theatre.

This is an exciting development for the Seagull and for Lowestoft as it allows us to develop professional Theatre provision in the town.

### **Staffing**

Our success in increasing revenue has meant that we have been able to expand our staffing this year.

In March we recruited a new Admin Assistant, Kerry Arlow. Kerry has already proven herself invaluable and is now a consistent presence in the building from 9 – 3 Monday to Friday. Many of you will already have met her – but if not please pop in and say Hello!

Kerry can be contacted on [office@theseagull.co.uk](mailto:office@theseagull.co.uk)

We have also been successful in raising some funding for additional work on our Dementia Project. This work is being undertaken by our Director Des Reynolds on a freelance basis for the next few months – so you may see him around even more !

### **Where's all the Money come from .....**

Some of our supporters have rightly been asking where all the money has come from for all the new developments. So here's a breakdown for you.

The Seagull is a Community Interest Company – that means that it is "not for Profit" – meaning that any money we make has to go back into the theatre. In the last financial year we raised some additional income and so were able to spend this on the building.

The majority of the additional income came from two main sources.

1. More people buying tickets

The average number of people attending each show rose last year and this obviously meant that our income rose too.

2. More people hiring the upstairs studio's

We were successful in hiring out the upstairs studio's more and this raised additional income. The biggest part of this was a lot of hire which came from CEFAS during their building work.

As well as this additional income there are two other ways in which more money is coming in.

### **Increased donations**

The amount of money being donated in the collection buckets at the end of performances has gradually risen. This alongside individual acts of kindness have generated a small but significant income. There are also a number of volunteers who kindly make a regular contribution through the Nest Egg scheme and this also provides money for ongoing improvements.

### **Grant funds**

We have also been successful recently in bidding for funds for specific projects. The following have all been funded from outside grants in the last few months

- Free Play Writing workshops
- Dementia Accessible Film Screenings
- Primary Schools Theatre Project

Although the money raised for these projects has strict limits on what it can be spent on, it does still generate some general income to boost the day to day running of the theatre. These projects also bring in more people to the building and that helps increase overall ticket sales.

### **The Big Project**

At our last volunteer meeting we mentioned plans for a big project to extend the building.

Over the last few months the Board of Directors have been working with a local architect to develop plans for a proposed extension to the Seagull. This work has almost reached the stage where we can share some possible ideas with you all.

In the coming months we will be holding a volunteers meeting to share the possible plans with you and discuss fundraising for this “big project”

### **How can you help out.....**

Many of you already do a fantastic amount to help out at the Seagull. But there are easy ways that you could help us out and enjoy yourself in the process.....

*1) Come and see a show !!!!*

This sounds obvious – but to be successful we need good audiences and the more shows you come and buy tickets for – the better it is for us. Karen has

to persuade bands, actors and companies to come and put on shows at the Seagull, and that's not easy if they don't think anyone will come and see them ! So the more often we can have big audiences, the better it is for the Theatre and everyone involved. This is especially true of shows you haven't heard of ! We try hard to get new and interesting shows into the Theatre – so if you see something advertised and you don't have a clue what it is ... Come and give it a try !!

### *2) Book in Advance*

Please Please Please – if you are going to come and see a show – please book your tickets in advance. A lot of theatre groups and bands ring us in the week or so before they are due to come, and ask about advance bookings. Sometimes if too few people have booked in advance they actually cancel the show because they don't think enough people will come. We know that a lot of you show up on the night and buy your tickets on the door, but convincing a band or theatre group of that can be hard. So please – BOOK IN ADVANCE !

### *3) Share, Post and Like on Social Media*

If you are on Facebook – please like our Seagull Theatre page ([facebook.com/seagulltheatre](https://facebook.com/seagulltheatre)), share our posts and write comments. Facebook is one of the main ways we publicise events and we really need your help to make that successful. Every time you share our posts they get seen by a lot more people. If you write comments then again more people see the posts. The more people who see it the more might come to see a show. So please don't just read it – SHARE IT, LIKE IT and COMMENT

### *4) Write a review*

We are not just on Facebook ! We are also on Tripadvisor. Leaving us a review on TripAdvisor really helps people from outside of Lowestoft find us. It only take a minute or two but it really does make a difference !

### *5) Make a regular donation*

If you are feeling particularly generous you can set up a regular donation to the Seagull. We have a number of regular givers who provide a monthly amount to support the Theatre. This money make a real difference to us and has contributed massively to being able to fix up the roof in particular. If you would like to set up a regular donation, let us know and we will give you the bank details you would require.

*6) Offer some time*

Most of our volunteers have started out working in the Box office or behind the bar, but inevitably life gets in the way and we're unable to offer any time for a while. Then sometimes you just drop out of the habit.

If that's you and you haven't done a shift for a while or no longer get the texts asking you to volunteer – why not get in touch and get back into it. Even if you only do one shift a month – it would really help.

*7) Deliver some programmes*

We invest heavily in a brochure three times a year. It has all the details of our shows and is a great resource – but its pretty useless if no one sees it. We try to get as many out as possible – but if you have an afternoon spare and would like to deliver some more for us – just let us know.

**How to get in touch**

There are lots of ways to get in touch – you could ...

- 1) Message us on Facebook – this is often the quickest way to get a response
- 2) Email us at [info@theseagull.co.uk](mailto:info@theseagull.co.uk) - we check these message most weekdays – but you might have to wait a day or so for a response
- 3) Phone and leave a message – 01502 589726 – again we will get back to you as soon as we can – but it may take a couple of days
- 4) Send us a letter – No one ever does this – but its possible.

**Lastly.....**

**THANK YOU**

**We can never say a big enough thank you for all the time and effort which is put into the Theatre by all the fantastic volunteers.**

**Without you there would be no Seagull !!**

**Sammy the Seagull**