



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Frankie Singleton
Liberal Democrat Councillor for
Hazel Grove Ward
Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture
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22 January 2024

Rt Hon Lucy Frazer KC MP
Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London SW1A 2BQ

Dear Rt Hon Lucy Frazer KC MP,

Urgent funding for RAAC repairs in local cultural venues

I want to bring to your urgent attention the detrimental impact that RAAC (reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete) is having on important community cultural facilities across the country. This is resulting in the closure of venues that play vital role in local communities. We urge the government to work with local councils to find a sustainable solution to fund repairs, and any costs incurred whilst repairs continue, similar to the approach that has been taken with schools and colleges via the Department for Education and the Education and skills funding agency.

Following the change in Government guidance in August 2023, Stockport Council conducted a review of its corporate estate. The council was already aware of a RAAC product in one of our key cultural venues Romiley Forum. An urgent inspection took place by a third party structural engineer which confirmed the presence of RAAC.

The theatre is operated by NK Theatre Arts (NKTA) who were granted a lease from Stockport Council in 2003 for 30 years. After inspection, in discussion with Stockport Council in their role as landlord, NKTA took the decision to close the theatre.

The impact the closure of the Forum Theatre has had on the local community cannot be understated. It sits at the heart of the precinct which contains residential and commercial premises. The theatre is an important community asset and is pivotal to the local economy. It welcomed 64,959 visitors last year, an increase of 40%, whilst also driving footfall to vital local businesses.

Due to the current financial pressures facing the Council and NKTA, neither can fund the cost of repair which will be circa £2m on top of the continued loss of income.

We believe that this issue has become urgent in local communities across the country. Therefore, we urge the government to provide funding for repairs in local cultural venues in line with the approach taken to Schools and Colleges.

Yours sincerely,

F. Singleton

Cllr Frankie Singleton
Cabinet member for Communities, Culture and Sport

Lisa Smart

Cllr Lisa Smart
Chair of Werneth Area
Committee