

# King's Theatre appoints Bennetts Associates to redevelop the Grande Old Dame of Leven Street

The redevelopment of the King's Theatre was officially launched yesterday with the announcement that Bennetts Associates have been appointed as architects.

**Capital Theatres**, the charitable trust which runs the Festival and King's Theatres and The Studio, launched the King's Theatre Edinburgh Redevelopment Campaign with the announcement that the architects **Bennetts Associates** will design the new theatre.



Visualisation of the front elevation courtesy of Bennetts Associates

The visualisations for the redeveloped King's Theatre show a design that aspires to retain the majesty of the original building but reimagines it for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The images, a cross-section of the re-imagined building and a front side view showing the building's depth down Tarvit Street, capture a design which makes best use of the space available in the original 1906 building and offers scope to create additional front of house space including a stunning roof terrace with views across the city skyline.

This project will transform one of Scotland's oldest theatres making it accessible to all for future generations.

Bennetts Associates was founded by Rab and Denise Bennetts after they graduated from the University of Edinburgh and is now one of the UK's leading architectural practices.

In this its thirtieth year the firm has just completed the Bayes Centre which was officially opened last month. Bennetts Associates is also in charge of several renowned cultural projects including Storyhouse in Chester, a much-loved cultural centre which combines a theatre, cinema and library, and the extension to Shaftesbury Theatre, both of which received RIBA National Awards this year.

Joining Bennetts Associates as the appointed architect on the project will be **Theatreplan**, global theatre design and technical theatre consultancy specialists. Together the two firms are also working on the transformation of Citizens Theatre in Glasgow.

**Duncan Hendry**, Chief Executive of **Capital Theatres** said: "We are delighted to have appointed Bennetts Associates to lead the design team who will transform the King's Theatre over the next few years. Bennetts have extensive experience of redeveloping theatres and heritage buildings across the UK and we were impressed by the elegance of their initial designs. We look forward to working with them to deliver a stunning building.

"The King's Theatre holds a special place in the hearts of many people from Edinburgh and further afield. The King's really is 'Everyone's Theatre' and throughout this exciting redevelopment project we hope people will help us secure the future of their theatre. In early 2019 we will provide ways in which people can engage with, give opinion and support the project."

**Councillor Donald Wilson**, Culture and Communities Convener at the **City of Edinburgh Council**, said: "The King's Theatre has been a firm Edinburgh favourite for over a century and the

Council is proud to pledge £4m towards its redevelopment. From some of the most talented community stage groups in the country and children's shows, to theatre directly from London's West End, the 'Grand Old Lady of Leven Street' has always been Edinburgh's theatre for everyone. This essential investment drive will help all of us enjoy a night at the King's for many more years to come."

**James Nelmes**, Associate Director at **Bennetts Associates** said: "The King's Theatre has a unique place in the hearts and minds of many Edinburgh residents and is a theatre of national architectural importance. We are delighted to be working with Capital Theatres and Theatreplan to bring it to the next stage. The plans to modernise the existing facilities and transform the experiences of visitors, performers and staff will help the theatre to remain a vital part of Edinburgh's cultural provision for years to come."

**Mathew Smethurst-Evans**, Executive Director UK for **Theatreplan** said: "Theatreplan is really excited to be part of the team rejuvenating this historic theatre, and modernising its facilities to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It's also great to be working with Bennetts Associates again and adding another project to our experience collaborating on unique theatre spaces."

### **King's Theatre, Performing for the Future**

Since it was first opened in 1906 Grade A listed King's has become one of the best loved venues for all kinds of entertainment from panto to serious drama. Now over 200,000 people come to the King's each year and it plays a central role in the Edinburgh International Festival.

It is the only surviving operational theatre by the architects Swanston and Davidson.

It has been some time since the theatre has been upgraded and now it is felt that a major transformation is required to improve facilities for audiences and performers alike. This is the only way to preserve audience numbers and the theatre itself, enabling it to attract the best productions.

This ambitious project will result in the repair, enhancement and expansion of one of Scotland's oldest working theatres. The interior and exterior of the theatre will both be overhauled to enrich the audience experience and create a renewed sense of destination for the King's Theatre.

### **The project will :**

1. More than double the opening hours
2. Increase annual visitor figures by 50%
3. Contribute £15m in economic impact per year for Edinburgh, an increase of £3m from current operations
4. Create more than 100 volunteering roles

### **How will the King's change?**

- There will be a **new street level café and bar**, accessible directly from Leven Street, along with an exciting new roof top hospitality space, providing spectacular 360-degree views of the City.
- **Installation of lifts and ramps** will enable visitors with mobility issues to be able to access all areas of the King's for the first time.
- A **brand-new learning studio** will be created, providing a much-needed space for community engagement, and educational projects.
- The existing **bars and foyers** will be overhauled whilst retaining their heritage and charm providing flexible and enjoyable entertainment spaces for pre and post-performance.
- The stage will be flattened to attract world-class opera and dance so that we can **offer a more diverse programme**

for our audiences. The orchestra pit will be rebuilt to support improved acoustics for opera and musicals.

- Essential repairs will be made to wiring, lighting and the safety curtain to make them fit for purpose, as well as improvements to set and scenery access to allow **the building to work efficiently** for the future.
- **Back of house facilities** like dressing rooms, wardrobe and the green room will be given a long overdue facelift.

Bennetts Associates has presented their initial designs and will continue to develop designs through 2019, with a finalised design ready in 2020. Redevelopment works are scheduled to begin in September 2021, with the theatre closed for 20 months, reopening summer 2023.

The project will cost in the region of £20million. Funds are already in place from Capital Theatres (£5m) and the **City of Edinburgh Council**(£4m). Remaining funds will be sourced from a fundraising campaign, applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund, and other grant making trusts as well as statutory bodies.

The design team will be led by Bennetts Associates as the appointed architect, alongside Theatreplan and Project Mangers **Thomas & Adamson**. They will be joined by Mechanical and Electrical Engineers **Max Fordham**; Civil and Structural Engineers **Will Rudd Davidson**, Quantity and Surveyors **Gleeds**.

For more information about the King's Theatre redevelopment and how you can support the fundraising campaign [CLICK HERE](#) or call [0131 622 8087](tel:01316228087)



King's Theatre Photo Keith Hunter