

Four large, white, diagonal geometric shapes are positioned on the left side of the image, overlapping the background. They are arranged in a descending staircase pattern from top-left to bottom-right.

# BHP Case Study: Buxton Opera House

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Opened in 1903, Buxton Opera House was originally designed by celebrated architect Frank Matcham. The theatre currently presents around 450 performances each year featuring everything from dance, comedy and dramas to musical concerts, pantomimes, and operas.

In 2019, the theatre underwent a major shift in focus, with several senior appointments being made including Professor Judy Simons and Alan Scott joining its Board of Trustees as Chair and Chair of the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee respectively. While experienced artistic director Paul Kerryson joined as CEO in December 2016.

Following these changes, the theatre has again achieved NPO (national portfolio organisation) status from the Arts Council, which means it receives funding from the national development agency. This status has enabled the theatre to further develop its artistic programme and expand its learning and engagement outreach within the High Peak area.

The refreshed focus has also seen the theatre launch its first co-produced touring stage show, *The Full Monty*, alongside renowned producer Mark Goucher and the Everyman Theatre in Cheltenham. This calculated risk has proved to be a major success both in Buxton and its touring venues and has created a new opportunity for the theatre as it moves forward.



## A new vision

This new approach comes in the wake of Buxton Opera House's longstanding relationship with BHP. Having initially been appointed to support the new Board with financial advice and expertise to assist with its new vision and ambitions, BHP, one of the north's leading independent accountancy firms, has provided what the theatre describes as "invaluable" support throughout an unprecedented period, which included the Covid-19 pandemic and its subsequent impact.

Alan Scott, Chair of the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee at the theatre, explained that BHP, as a multi-partnered firm with a track record of working in the Third sector, was "worth its weight in gold", and that the team's experience of working with other theatres had helped them prepare for the next stage in this historic venue's journey.



## Difficult times

Like all theatres, Buxton Opera House faced challenging times throughout the pandemic when it was forced to shut. Alan gives credit to the team at BHP in helping the board plan for the future, and how its previous work on the theatre's accounts meant they were in a positive position for when applications had to be made for government support.

He said: "When you apply for things like the Culture Recovery Fund, the Government want to see your accounts and to know about your governance, so the time we've taken in working with BHP following our board appointments to really improve our policies and procedures has proved to be invaluable."



## Adding Value

Alan also believes the benefits of working with BHP go beyond the services the Board and theatre receive.

He explained: "We receive a quarterly newsletter, which doesn't just try to sell to us, but contains helpful information about what the Charity Commission is doing and conveys changes that we might not otherwise be aware of. This, alongside the annual training session we receive for our staff and trustees from BHP's experts, are the added benefits that have really helped us shift the dial of what is possible."

“ The team at BHP are fonts of all knowledge and have considerable experience working with charities and theatres, which they bring to bear to support our ambitious plans.”

Alan Scott — Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee

## Looking to the future

Buxton Opera House has ambitious plans to not only continue to push its artistic programme but to invest in the theatre to ensure that it can continue to serve the people of the High Peak district for another century and beyond.

When asked about whether Buxton Opera House would recommend BHP, Alan said: "We have done, and will continue to do so. The quality of the work, the people and their approach really help to transform not just the business's approach to our finances but also our ambitions and plans."



Read more about BHP's highly experienced Charities and Not-for-profit team and how we can support your organisation here.

Get in touch  
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Image by David John King

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