

Federation of Scottish Theatre/Festivals Edinburgh
Joint Technical Advisory Group on Safer Systems (TAGSS)

NOTES 25 MARCH, 11.00-12.30PM VIA ZOOM

ATTENDEES: Louise Gregory (Freelance), Ruth Butterworth (Freelance), Fi Fraser (Freelance), Gemma Swallow (NTS), John Pik), Nick Trueman (Pitlochry Festival Theatre), Tom Barnes (Lyth Arts), Jennie Green (Great Leap Forward), John Robb (EIF), Nik Whybrew (Assembly Festival), Kevin Kimber (Festival Fringe Society), David Butterworth (Royal Lyceum), Graham Sutherland (Citizens Theatre)

PRESENT: Fiona Sturgeon Shea, Amanda Liddle (Federation of Scottish Theatre), Julia Amour, Kirstie Allan (Festivals Edinburgh), Ann Monfries (Scottish Government), Yolanda Aguilar (Independent) .

APOLOGIES: Phil Brown (UKT), Robin Townley (ABTT)

1. Introductions

RB welcomed attendees and introduced Fiona Sturgeon Shea in her new role as CEO of the Federation of Scottish Theatre (FST). RB thanked Graham Sutherland for volunteering to be Co-Chair of the group.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting on 18 February 2021

The minutes of the last meeting were approved as a true and accurate record. AL noted that they will go online now that they are approved. It was agreed that it would be good for members to get the minutes ahead of the meeting to approve by email so that they can go live on FST's website more quickly.

3. Update from Scottish Government and reflections on latest guidance

AM updated members on a recent Scottish Government meeting which was held imminently after the changes to protection levels and strategic framework was announced on 16th March. AM shared that performing arts venues could open at level 2, with the indicative date for this as 17th May. Figures for capacity limits for events and venues in different levels has not yet been finalised, however AM assured members that that developing this framework would continue in the pre-election period, and should be publicised soon. AM noted that there is still caution in the government and that the numbers proposed so far have been low, reflective of capacities allowed at events in the Highlands and Islands in Summer 2020.

Members were then invited to discuss what might be the gaps in the new guidance and how organisations can link a good practice matrix to official government guidelines. Some of the main points discussed were:

- Members shared that for many organisations the indicative numbers would be prohibitive, and financial support would be needed. Also noted was the difficulty in hoping for level 0, where capacity levels would still be in place, since that would require almost no covid cases in Scotland. AM shared that a case was being made for a percentage/ratio formula (with a maximum) to calculate capacity figures based on venue size/space, but this was not confirmed to be the model that would be used for 2021.

- Several members expressed concerns about the different approaches to mitigations for events between England and Scotland.
- JA gave details on the Gateway Process for designated signature Scottish events this summer – a type of national EPOG, which has been developed in partnership by the Scottish Government Major Events Team and EventScotland – explaining that selected events would be organised in line with latest public health advice, outside of the restrictions that are generally in place at the time. This process would hopefully become a gateway for the sector to open up, and for the government and public to gain confidence in managed live events. JA shared that so far the process is having positive outcomes, particularly around knowledge-sharing across the events sector and public health bodies. **ACTION - JA** – i). Share relevant intel from all events participating in Summer gateway process; ii). **ACTION - JR** Share Edinburgh International Festival’s event planning scenarios and experience in Gateway process
- Some members were keen to offer their expertise to run test events in their organisations, both ahead of and alongside level changes. AM responded that the Scottish Government had felt that the sector did not need to prove its ability to safely manage events, and so had not issued any testing projects, however the sector would have access to data being carried out by research partners in England.
- Members discussed how ‘Testing To Enable’ was being used in industries such as film/tv production and education, and whether such a practice would be viable for the performing arts sector. It was noted that while this could be overseen with relative simplicity for staff, the process for implementing such a practice for audiences would be incredibly complex, and could leave organisations commercial liable. JA noted that FE and EventScotland are organising a national webinar interviewing John Harden, Deputy National Clinical Director after the new guidelines are issued. **ACTION - JA** to inform TAGSS of any updates to event confirmation.
- One member highlighted that wording specifically referring to ‘performing arts venues’ did not appear in the strategic framework, which had created uncertainty about application. **ACTION - AM** to ensure wording is clear in publication of capacity guidance, however the strategic framework wording has already been finalised and so could not be amended.

4. Paper (attached for discussion)

- *Statement of Objective*
- *Statement of who our audience is*
- *Statement of structure and content linking out to official guidance*
- *Testing phase*

Members approved the three statements and structure of the ‘Testing Phase’ which had been written up by RB and shared ahead of the meeting. **ACTION - RB** would now develop further and circulate for any comments.

RB confirmed that the next phase would be to create a model risk assessment or check list for every bullet point. It was acknowledged that this document would be in line with Scottish Government guidance, while pointing people towards the guidance and in no way trying to substitute for it, with the aim to give in-depth detail to practitioners on what is operationally achievable within the mitigations across the level system.

In discussion, it was noted that several useful documents and toolkits would be uploaded to the Dropbox for knowledge sharing. These included the updated Purple Guide (published 25 March 2021), REMT's risk assessment guidelines, and VisitBritain's 'We're Good To Go' tourism and events venues. **ACTION – RB** to mark items uploaded to Dropbox as 'public' or 'shared in confidence' based on whether contributors are happy to make them open to any interested users beyond the TAGSS group.

5. AOB

- Outdoor venue parameters - Members advised that the parameters of an outdoor venue mirrored the regulations that dictate external smoking structures, which must be less than 50% enclosed.
- 28 Day Planning Restrictions - JA shared update from today that the Chief Planner to the Scottish Government has written to local authorities giving permission to relax this rule while social distancing is in place for structures ancillary to existing businesses, to support the events and hospitality sector (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/chief-planner-letter-stakeholder-update--march-2021/>)