

Dear Arts Alive member,

Following the insolvency of Artrix, I thought I would update you on what has been happening. Thanks to everyone who has been posting and sending emails.

Firstly, Karen May, leader of the council, has told me she is happy for me to share this response which she sent to Kate Shaw:

*"As I stated in my comment to the press as Leader of the Council and, on a personal note, I am deeply saddened by this news. We have been working with the Artrix Trustees over the last few months to try and identify a way of securing the long-term sustainability of the facility by considering funding, grant and alternative business planning opportunities. Unfortunately the Coronavirus pandemic left them, on top of their already fragile finances with no option but insolvency.*

*I have asked officers and partners to try to identify options so as to secure the future of the facility; BDC is committed to retain the venue as an arts venue and will explore options to make that happen in a viable and sustainable way."*

The last sentence is reassuring, and seems to me to go further than the official press release.

There has been a lot of support from other councillors in exploring a way forward as well. Although BDC owns the building, they cannot simply take over Artrix, as the charity is insolvent and no longer exists and it is important to remember that a viable business proposal will take a while to put together and patience is needed.

There are several options, including looking at the Redditch Palace Theatre model. The 'Tell me what you want' Action plan may well help in encouraging a collaborative approach.

There is a group already active in developing a possible business plan. The Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/The-Future-of-the-Artrix-Bromsgrove-106041967737836/> and for the moment the best support we can give is by encouraging our members to 'like' the page, rather than starting another petition. The aim of the page is to keep everyone updated about the progress being made and a vision/plan. A post from 12 April gives more information:

*"We have reached out to the leader of the Council, Karen May and other Councillors at Bromsgrove District Council and have had some encouraging emails of support and information. This is something we will continue to do over the coming weeks which will lead to further communication and ultimately discussions about the future of the building.*

*So, who are we?*

*We are a group built up of previous performers, hirers and supporters of the venue. All concerned and motivated to return a fully commercial and viable theatre to the Bromsgrove area. We are supported by other experienced individuals who have come forward to help lead the project in securing the future,*

*We have also been in discussions with some previous members of staff who are excited and supportive of our vision. Like the rest of us they also want to get a theatre open back at the venue.*

*How do we move forward?*

*We need to hold discussions with the Bromsgrove District Council about what options are available for a fully commercial venture to relaunch the venue. We are confident we have made all of the steps we can at the moment to secure these conversations.*

*How can you help?*

*The support we have had so far in less than 24 hours of launching the page has been fantastic, just by liking this page and voicing your support is really encouraging.*

*If you know of anyone else who may also like to support, please do share the page with them so they also can be kept up to date with progress."*

Of course there may be other proposals from other directions, and BAA will do what it can to support any viable proposal. At present there is not much point in rushing in to fundraising - as I said in the last email, Artrix are unable to accept donations.

I have written to Karen May expressing our thanks for her positive response, and assuring her of our support in helping find a way forward:

*"Dear Karen,*

*On behalf of Bromsgrove Arts Alive I would like to thank you for your positive comment where you stated that BDC is committed to retain the Artrix building as an arts venue. I know that some of our 50 or so member organisations have already been in touch with you expressing their concern for its future. Bromsgrove Arts Alive is keen to offer support for a viable proposal and would like to be involved in any consultations. I know that at the moment councillors are extremely busy managing the covid situation, but we look forward to hearing of progress in due course."*

Please do let me know if you have any further suggestions at this time

All best

Steve