

**THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

**FINANCE, HOUSING AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
26 FEBRUARY 2014**

Agenda Item	<b>32</b>
Report No	<b>FHR/54/14</b>

**REDEVELOPMENT OF EDEN COURT THEATRE  
ORCHESTRA PIT**

**Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service**

**Summary**

This report invites Members to approve that **£40,000** is given from the Capital Discretionary Fund to contribute to the cost of redeveloping the Eden Court Empire Theatre Orchestra Pit.

**1. Background**

1.1 The orchestra pit below the stage of the Empire Theatre at Eden Court was designed and built in 1976.

The pit can accommodate a maximum of 50 players and is used on average for 18 weeks per year.

1.2 The pit is now no longer fit for purpose.

It is too small to accommodate the number of players required by many companies and some orchestras have had to reduce the number of players used in other theatres when the tour programmed to Inverness.

In addition the design of the pit is such that sight lines from players to conductor are seriously compromised by steel supporting columns and lifting equipment.

1.3 Due to the restrictions in the pit it has not been possible for some productions, most notably some elements of the Scottish Opera programme to be toured to Inverness.

**2. Proposal**

2.1 In order to bring the pit up to modern requirements it is proposed to:

- Lower the floor of the pit to provide more headroom and better sight lines from players to conductor
- Replace the lifting equipment with modern equipment which will not impede the sight lines from players to conductor
- Increase the size of the pit by removing a piano store. This will mean that the pit will be able to accommodate 75 musicians
- Install a fully compliant platform lift to enable disabled access to the orchestra pit.

### 3. Funding

3.1 The total costs for the works are **£139,875**.

3.2 Eden Court Theatre has secured funding for of:

- **£65,000** from Creative Scotland
- **£5,000** from Scottish Opera
- **£5,000** from its own funds, and
- Is seeking up to **£25,000** from a range of charitable trusts.

3.3 The Highland Council owns the Eden Court Theatre building and the Theatre is seeking a contribution of **£40,000** towards the costs from Highland Council.

### 4. Implications

4.1 There are no resource, legal, equality, climate change/Carbon Clever or risk implications arising from this report.

<b>5.</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
5.1	As the orchestra pit at Eden Court Empire Theatre is now close to 40 years old and through its construction and design is having a negative impact on programme it is recommended that a <b>£40,000</b> contribution to the overall funding package is given from the Capital Discretionary Fund in financial year 2014/15.

Designation: Hugh Fraser, Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service

Date: 17 February 2014

Author: Hugh Fraser

Background Papers: