

BARN FAQs



What is BARN?

BARN is a collective theatre initiative, facilitated by Take Art, that supports Somerset's emergent theatre-making sector to develop, test and showcase new work in a predominantly rural context.

It was inspired by the North American rural tradition of barn-raising: in our case, the collective action of a theatre-making sector to build and sustain Somerset's theatre infrastructure.

With support from the [Esmée Fairbairn Foundation](#), BARN Phase 1 ran from 2017 to 2019. In 2020 we ran an emergency support programme. Thanks to further support from Esmée Fairbairn, BARN Phase 2 extends until March 2022.

BARN resources theatre-makers to take risks, build resilience and sustain your practice, artistically and financially. It does this by nurturing emerging work, providing support and safe places for ideas to incubate, grow and flourish. It should give you confidence to make choices about what your work looks like. This ownership, we hope, will help to drive sustainability.

What activity will BARN Phase 2 support?

BARN Phase 2 is informed by the profound impact that Covid-19 has had on us all and the projected roadmap out of lockdown. One of the many things we've learnt over the last 15 months is the need for flexibility and new ways of working, which we hope is reflected in our plans.

It will include a Growth and Seed Fund; producing, business and access support; and showcasing opportunities, including at least one BARNfest. Another strand of the initiative aims to help strengthen the South West regional infrastructure for theatre-makers.

Is there other support you offer?

As much as we'd like to, we won't be able to support every project idea financially. But, at the very least, we will do our best to offer advice, broker relationships and signpost you to other opportunities.

What are some of BARN's key features?

- supports the making of new theatre in a predominantly rural context;
- represents a range of small, but meaningful, strategic interventions;
- focuses on work of different scales* to meet the diverse needs of theatre-makers and audiences;
- encourages collective action;
- connects theatre-makers across the county, through regular activity networking and peer support;
- enables theatre-makers to create their own pathways through the different strands;
- offers flexibility, recognising that not everyone is at the same stage of the creative process or needs all the activity;
- values audience involvement in the making process;
- offers different ways to build critical mass eg ideas fund, platforms and progression opportunities.

* with a particular focus on supporting small-scale, touring theatre

Who will BARN support?

BARN is for anyone with a demonstrable commitment to theatre-making in Somerset; who aspires to grow and sustain their practice, artistically and financially; wants to work collectively with other professional colleagues and audiences to build the county's theatre infrastructure; and buys into the spirit of BARN's intentions.

What do you mean by Somerset?

BARN supports theatre-making in the area currently administered by Somerset County Council, which includes the four district councils of South Somerset; Mendip; Sedgemoor; Somerset West and Taunton. In partnership with [Theatre Orchard](#) and [Culture Weston](#), we are often able to extend BARN's support to the unitary authority of North Somerset but NOT to Bristol or B&NES.

What do you mean by 'emergent'?

By 'emergent', we are referring to the theatre-making *sector* in Somerset, not individuals or companies.

How do you define theatre and theatre-maker?

This is self-defining; if you feel that there is a good fit with what you do, we're happy to hear from you.

Why involve audiences in the making process?

By being part of the creative process, audiences and promoters are able to engage with the work at an early stage and feel more inclined to support it when it tours. In developing a relationship with the theatre-maker, they invest their own ideas and energy. In that sense, they become great advocates for the work, thereby contributing to the value and sustainability of the sector.

What sort of venues does BARN work with?

We have good relationships with several venues and promoters (theatres and arts centres as well as village halls) who would be willing to support R&D, showcase platforms etc

How does BARN relate to the SPA Collective?

The [SPA \(Somerset Performing Arts\) Collective](#) is a working group that came together to express a need and desire for a stronger network and advocacy for work made in Somerset, North Somerset and B&NES. BARN has been instrumental in supporting the development of the collective, along with Somerset County Council; over the next few months we will be exploring how to bring the two initiatives further into alignment.

Who are Sarah and Mark?

Sarah Peterkin, Rural Touring Director and Co-Director of Theatre since 1991, has significant knowledge and experience of rural arts practice.

Mark Helyar, Co-Director of Theatre since 2009, has significant experience in strategic and business planning, project management, directing, producing and dramaturgy. He has been artistic director of two touring companies, Proteus and West 28th Street. He works part-time at Take Art: the rest of his time he is a freelance theatre-maker, writer, musician and university lecturer.

How do we contact you?

If you have any questions about **BARN**, the best way to contact us is via email: sarah@takeart.org and mark@takeart.org. Please also keep an eye on the website for regular updates: <https://takeart.org/barn>