VENUE-TO-HUB: ENGINEERING GRASSROOTS RESILIENCE

The Venue-to-Hub Blueprint · 28-29 Viaduct Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1TS

hotboxlive.co.uk/venue-to-hub · contact@hotboxlive.co.uk · +44 1245 415952

A NATIONAL PILOT PROJECT · SEPTEMBER 2026

A national pilot project to turn a traditional performance venue into a high-performance daytime creative hub.

Status: planned. This document sets out the plan, and the blueprint we're sharing with other venues.

1. THE VISION: INFRASTRUCTURE AS AN ENABLER

Fixing the "daytime bottleneck".

Grassroots venues are more than performance stages: they're vital cultural infrastructure. At the moment, we operate on an unpredictable, night-time-only cycle. By upgrading our building, we'll move from a reactive venue to a proactive, dual-use creative space that provides good jobs, industry-standard technical training and professional production space during the day.

- **From venue to hub:** a second, daytime income stream that protects us from the ups and downs of night-time ticket sales.
- **Production capability:** a professional Allen & Heath SQ7+ production system for high-quality recording, rehearsals and pre-production work.
- **Accessibility first:** we're aiming for Attitude is Everything Gold for the new hub, building on our current Bronze. A hydraulic lift and a raised stage will give every artist, technician and audience member full, independent access.

2. CO-DESIGNED FOR IMPACT

A workspace shaped by the people who use it.

This project wasn't designed in a vacuum. We consulted local creative people to make sure the upgrades solve the real problems facing local artists.

- **Community consultation:** roundtable feedback sessions with local musicians, disability-led collectives and technical colleges helped define our production workflows, sightlines and layout.
- **Vocational focus:** every specification, from the accessible hydraulic lift to the technical rigging, is designed to make Hot Box a professional home for Chelmsford's creative growth, and a training ground for the region's 16+ workforce.

3. ENGINEERING AUTHORITY: TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Built to last.

The upgrade is designed to industrial engineering standards, with a focus on durability and everyday practicality, so that every pound invested delivers value for years to come.

- **Integrated production systems:** industry-standard sound and lighting that switch easily between live shows and daytime production.
- **Streamlined workflow:** a redesigned layout that cuts set-up time, so the space can be used more often and more efficiently.
- **Safety and compliance:** every installation is planned to exceed current health, safety and fire regulations, making Hot Box a safe pair of hands for professional creative work.

4. THE OPEN-SOURCE BLUEPRINT

Sharing what we learn with the whole sector.

We're not just improving our own building; we're building a model the UK's grassroots music sector can use. We'll document Venue-to-Hub as an open case study: a practical, lessons-learned blueprint that helps other grassroots venues follow the

same path to sustainable, multi-purpose business models.

It sits alongside the Open Source Residency Toolkit from The Live Project (hotboxlive.co.uk/the-live-project).

5. OUR COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY: THE ACTIVE LEARNING LOOP

Impact, measured.

We'll run Venue-to-Hub like an engineering project. Our Active Learning Loop is a management system that tracks our progress against our public commitments.

- **Daytime use:** we'll track how much of our daytime capacity is used: from about 5% today, aiming for 15% in Year 1 and 30% by the end of our three-year plan.
- **Training pathway:** we'll count the young people (16+) who join our technical training, and track how many go on to paid freelance work.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion:** annual reviews will check that the people taking part reflect the diversity of Chelmsford, and we'll share the results openly.

6. STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Strengthening the cultural ecosystem.

Our work is strengthened by a coalition of regional partners committed to cultural resilience and professional standards. See our funders, partners and accreditors at hotboxlive.co.uk/community.

CONTACT

To talk to us about Venue-to-Hub, email contact@hotboxlive.co.uk. The latest version of this plan is always at hotboxlive.co.uk/venue-to-hub.