Ludlow Assembly Rooms

Programming Policy 2026

1. Introduction

LAR is committed to nurturing creativity, fostering community, and presenting work of the highest artistic quality. This policy sets out the principles that guide the decisions we make about the work we programme, promote, commission, and present.

This policy is intended as a means to share our principles with artists and groups who may wish to present their work at LAR. It is also intended to help guide our internal programming decisions.

This policy is designed to support confident, considered decision-making, including the decision to programme challenging work.

This policy applies to all productions, exhibitions, events, workshops, participatory projects, and any other activity presented under the venue's name or on its premises, whether produced in-house, co-produced, or programmed from external companies and artists.

2. Our Vision

We believe that the arts have the power to entertain, challenge, inspire, and transform. Our vision is to be a place where artists and audiences from all backgrounds feel genuinely welcomed, represented, and creatively stimulated; a space where work can be courageous and ambitious, accessible and rooted in our community.

We aspire to programme work that reflects the full diversity of the audiences we serve, both on stage and off, and to use our platform responsibly in service of a more equitable and inclusive culture.

3. Artistic Vision and Programming Ethos

3.1 Scope and Ambition

Our programme spans theatre, dance, live music, comedy, spoken word, visual art, film, and interdisciplinary work. This includes both well-loved classics and new work. We actively and equally welcome work that is mainstream and popular, and work that is experimental, and we recognise that these categories need not be mutually exclusive. We aim to ensure each season of work includes a balanced mix of art forms, and thematic content, in order to serve our whole community living and working in Ludlow and its surrounding districts.

We are interested in work that:

- Takes creative risks and demonstrates genuine artistic ambition.
- Has something meaningful to say and uses form and craft with intention.
- Engages with contemporary life, current ideas, and the world as it is experienced by people living in our community and in the wider world. This does not preclude work written or creating in the past, as long as it feels relevant to a modern audience.
- Demonstrates a clear understanding of its target audience and possesses a realistic business case or box-office potential to support the venue's earned income targets.
- Offers opportunities for secondary spend, such as café and bar sales, to help maximize organisational revenue and provide a comprehensive service for our customers.

3.2 Local, National and International Work

We actively seek to programme work from local and regional artists and companies, alongside national touring productions and, where resources permit, international work. We believe that a genuinely exciting programme draws on multiple levels, and we are particularly committed to supporting the development of local artists at earlier stages of their careers.

3.3 Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

LAR's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion sits alongside, and absolutely does not diminish, our responsibility to the majority who form the bedrock of our audience today. However, we are committed to programming work that reflects the breadth of human experience and to actively dismantle barriers that have historically excluded certain voices from the arts. This includes paying attention to who shapes and leads the creative work, not just who is represented within it.

3.4 Financial Sustainability and Risk Management

While LAR is driven by artistic excellence and community impact, we recognise that financial resilience is essential to our long-term survival and independence. Our programming decisions must be grounded in fiscal responsibility to ensure the venue remains viable for future generations.

- High-margin, commercially viable programming will be intentionally scheduled to generate the financial surpluses required to subsidise riskier, experimental, or culturally vital projects that may operate at a financial loss.
- Every programmed event will undergo a financial risk assessment. While we embrace creative risk, the aggregate financial exposure must be managed within agreed budgets.

4. Artistic Freedom and Principles

We are staunch defenders of artistic freedom. We do not shy away from work that is provocative, satirical, sexually frank, politically engaged, or spiritually challenging. We believe that the ability to make and present challenging art without censorship is essential to a free and healthy society.

At the same time, we accept that artistic freedom is not unlimited and does not operate in a vacuum. We do not subscribe to the view that any content is permissible simply because it is labelled as art. We also recognise that attitudes and morality acceptable in the past may no longer be acceptable in

current times. Work presented at this venue carries an implicit endorsement, and we take that responsibility seriously.

Our principles to programming work is guided by the following questions:

- Does this work have a clear and considered artistic purpose?
- Is it made with craft, intentionality, and care?
- Is the intention of the work to illuminate, critique, or interrogate its subject matter, or does it simply trivialise, reproduce or celebrate harm?
- Have the affected communities been considered, and when appropriated, consulted, or involved in the making of this work?
- We recognise that great art can confront uncomfortable truths and give voice to perspectives that are hard to hear. Our test is not whether a work touches on difficult territory, but its intent and effect: whether it punches down at, demeans, or excludes a group, or whether it entertains, includes, and is offered in good faith. Our principle-based questions guide us to make effective and appropriate programme decisions.

Where there is doubt, the CEO and Programming Manager will make the final decision in consultation with relevant colleagues, and external advisors where appropriate.

5. Content Information and Audience Care

We are committed to ensuring that our audiences can make informed choices about the work they see. We will provide clear and accurate information about content that some audiences may find challenging, including (but not limited to): strobing effects, strong language, sexual content, nudity, graphic violence, themes of suicide or self-harm, and content relating to trauma.

Content information will be published on our website, included in booking confirmations, and displayed prominently at the venue on the day of the event. We aim to strike a balance between providing useful information and avoiding over-labelling in ways that deter audiences from engaging with important work.

6. Working with Artists and Companies

We expect all artists and companies working with us to share our commitment to the values set out in this policy. We will:

- Share this programming policy with all artists and companies at the point of first discussion.
- Include adherence to our content standards as a condition of any programming agreement or venue hire contract.
- Reserve the right to withdraw a booking where a company or individual has behaved in a manner inconsistent with this policy, or where newly available information suggests that the work would breach our content standards.

We recognise that these conversations can be complex and that context matters. We are committed to engaging in these discussions with openness, rigour, and good faith.

7. Commissioning and Co-production

Where we commission or co-produce work, we have greater influence over its content and form from an early stage. We will use this influence to:

- Encourage artists to consider questions of representation and impact from the outset of a creative process.
- Support artists to engage meaningfully with communities whose stories or experiences are central to the work.
- Provide dramaturgy, mentoring, and other forms of creative support to help artists realise their ambitions without compromising our shared values.
- Ensure that LAR's financial liability is explicitly capped, and actively pursue co-funding, grants, or partner investments to strictly mitigate our direct financial risk.

8. Venue Hire

Where we offer the venue for external hire, hirers are required to agree to our Venue Hire Terms and Conditions, which will reference this policy. We reserve the right to refuse or terminate a hire agreement where we have reasonable grounds to believe that the event would breach these standards.

The Charity's premises are administered strictly in accordance with its charitable objects. We will not permit any venue hire applications or bookings for activities or purposes that relate to any one particular political party, political campaign, or political group. Explicitly, the premises cannot be hired for political fundraising, party-political rallies, or partisan campaign events. An exception is made for officially elected Members of Parliament, Members of the Senedd/Scottish Parliament, or local Councillors holding standard constituent advice surgeries. Such surgeries must be strictly non-partisan, non-promotional, and used only to serve local residents in their official capacity, not for political campaigning or party recruitment.

We reserve the right to refuse or cancel a booking where the proposed use of our premises, or the activities of the hiring organisation in connection with the booking, would conflict with our charitable purposes, compromise our charitable independence, or give rise to a material risk to our beneficiaries, users or the charity's reputation. All such booking decisions taken by LAR will be made by reference to our charitable purposes, governing document and applicable legal requirements.

9. Review and Accountability

This policy will be reviewed annually by the CEO and Board of Trustees, with input from staff, artists, and community representatives where appropriate. In addition, the Board receives regular reporting on programming in line with the policy and its corresponding financial performance through updates at board meetings.

We welcome feedback on this policy and on our programme from our audiences, artists, and the wider community. Feedback can be submitted via admin@ludlowassemblyrooms.co.uk

10. Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy rests with the CEO, who is accountable to the Board of Trustees. Day-to-day implementation is the responsibility of the programming team.

Any concerns about the content of a programmed event that fall within the scope of this policy should be raised with the CEO in the first instance. Complaints from members of the public will be handled in accordance with our Complaints Policy.

Approved by: Board of Trustees

Date: July 2026

Review Date: July 2028