



PRESS RELEASE:

Music Venue Trust Publishes Research Report: "Understanding Small Music Venues"

Announces major strategic plan to protect, secure and develop UK grassroots music venues to be "the best in the world"

In December 2014 music charity **Music Venue Trust** organised the first national gathering of small and medium scale music venues from across the UK, **Venues Day 2014**. This week sees the publication of the research conducted by the **Institute of Contemporary Music Performance** in the lead up to and during Venues Day. **Understanding Small Music Venues** is a discussion document about how these venues operate, the challenges they face and the role they play. It invites the music industry, cultural sector, government and brands to respond strategically and constructively to protect, secure and develop them.

Over **120 venues** and **300 delegates** took part in the research project, which depicts a culturally rich grassroots sector upon which a diverse range of stakeholders depend for employment, training, social interaction, community engagement and cultural sustenance. The report highlights significant challenges (regulation, licensing, public perception and the rapidly changing urban environment) which threaten their survival and have combined to have a demoralising impact on venues, artists and audiences. However, the report also highlights that there is will, know-how and ingenuity to take positive steps to secure the future of grassroots music venues, and concludes with a call for activism, advocacy, support and above all investment in the network so that artists and audiences can enjoy the world class music venues the UK deserves.

Responding to the report's conclusions, Music Venue Trust Strategic Director **Beverley Whitrick** said: "We see the publication of this report as the key moment when the music industry, cultural sector, government and brands can seize the opportunity to listen to and learn from venues, artists and audiences enabling them to respond constructively and strategically to give them the calibre of venues the UK needs. Today, we're announcing a mechanism by which they can do that: The **Grassroots Investor** programme.

Grassroots Investor is a two phased strategic intervention into our grassroots music circuit designed in response to what we've learned from the report. Firstly, we want to urgently create one central agency that is able to represent grassroots venues and defend them at a national level. Our **crisis management** programme will employ a **central legal team, acoustics team, a lobbying arm** and create a **central crisis fund** so that collectively we do all we can so that **music venue closures are halted**, national policy is changed, and this sector's needs, so clearly expressed in the report, are addressed properly by cultural strategy and by licensing, insurance and legislation.

In phase two of Grassroots Investor, our ambition is to put direct investment into grassroots venues so that UK artists and audiences can enjoy the venues they deserve. A combination of low aspiration and severe under investment means we've ended up content to describe this sector as the "toilet circuit" and accept conditions in them that reflects all that description implies. There are examples from round the world of world class venues at this level, and through Grassroots Investor we aim to work with our partners to match those standards here in the UK".

CEO of the Music Venue Trust, **Mark Davyd**, added:

"A huge proportion of the music we export, which generates thousands of jobs, develops the artistic careers of our best writers and musicians, and is such an important part of the UK's standing on the



international cultural stage, starts in a grassroots venue. This is the research and development department of our major international music industry and we have to face facts; **despite the incredible passion, dedication and commitment of the people running these venues, what we're offering at grassroots level doesn't meet the high standards we've set elsewhere in UK music.**

The UK is a music world leader, punching vastly above its weight in terms of the impact our artists and musicians make across the globe and generating a turnover of **£1.6 billion**. Our UK music scene is built on a robust ecosystem that starts with a first live concert in front of as few as ten people on a Tuesday night in Guildford and climaxes with 3 nights at Wembley Stadium. This is the training ground and the entry level experience for our artists, new audiences, lighting engineers, sound technicians, and cultural organisers at all levels. It isn't good enough that we are letting small venues close for the sake of good legal representation or letting venues fall into disrepair because of lack of available investment.

We have the people with the skills and passion ready to run them, supported by artists and audiences across the country that are calling out for better facilities. With Grassroots Investor, everybody who has an interest in this sector can work together to maximise impact through strategic, sensible and sustainable investment. Instead of the piecemeal approach of the past it's time to address the whole grassroots circuit and give their work the respect and value it deserves".

The Music Venue Trust has recently launched its new website at **www.musicvenue trust.com** where audiences and artists can add their voices to the call to support **Grassroots Investor**. A full copy of **Understanding Small Music Venues** can be downloaded from the website, or read online at (link)

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**About Music Venue Trust:**

Music Venue Trust, founded in 2014, is a registered charity that seeks to preserve, secure and improve the UK's network of small to medium scale, mostly independently run, music venues. We have a long term plan to protect that live music network which includes, where necessary, taking into charitable ownership freehold properties so they can be removed from commercial pressures and leased back to passionate music professionals to continue their operation.

Resources:***Report:***

Understanding Small Music Venues: The Report can be read online at www.musicvenuetrust.com or downloaded from this link:

The report is in the public domain, please credit Music Venue Trust/Institute of Contemporary Music Performance

Photos:

Photos from Venues Days 2014 to accompany this press release are available to download from:
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/130561051@N04/sets/>

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