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Press Release

For immediate release

Geof Keys to leave Queen's Hall Arts, Hexham

After more than 20 years at the helm Geof Keys, Artistic Director of the Queen's Hall Arts Centre, Hexham is stepping down this summer. During his time at the arts centre he has led some big changes.

In 2001 Queen's Hall Arts was set up to take the local arts service out of direct local authority control. The new charity quickly raised the funds for major building works, creating gallery spaces, improving access and renovating the theatre. The rather daunting public building that housed a theatre and a library has become a welcoming multi-purpose arts centre and local services hub.

It has been a period of growth and development for the arts with an expanded programme of professional work alongside a commitment to community activity – and not just at the Queen's Hall. Some of the work Geof is most proud of has been across Northumberland – establishing the Highlights rural touring scheme, supporting local film clubs and playing a leading role in Bait, the Creative People & Places programme in SE Northumberland. Overall engagement numbers for the service have risen from 29,000 in 2001 to over 87,000 in 2017.

He says "20 years is an extraordinary length of time to be doing this job. I am deeply grateful to the QHA staff and board (and to the artists we support and the community we serve) for making it a pleasurable and satisfying experience – notwithstanding that it can be hard work at times! I believe that now is the right time for me to move on and also the right time for the organisation to refresh itself under new leadership, cushioned by the new agreements we have with our core funders, Arts Council England and Northumberland County Council, and a building fit for purpose."

Queen's Hall Arts has started the recruitment process (see www.queenshall.co.uk/vacancies).

Geof is planning to stay in the area developing a range of new projects to support North East based artists and companies.

W: www.queenshall.co.uk/vacancies

Artistic Director, Geof Keys is available for interview.

QHA: For more information, please contact Simon Haworth, Marketing Manager, Queen's Hall Arts Centre, Hexham.

T: 01670 624514 - direct line (not advertised)

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Notes:

About Queen's Hall Arts

Based in the heart of Hexham, Queen's Hall Arts (QHA) is a registered charity and multipurpose arts centre.

We develop and deliver a vibrant arts programme offering a wide range of shows, exhibitions, concerts and special events, support professional and aspiring artists, provide opportunities for our community to take part in the arts and offer a valuable creative resource to our local area.

Through the arts we make life better – having positive impacts on our community and the individuals who live and work within it.

- Queen's Hall Arts is the charity that manages the Queen's Hall Arts Centre venue within the Queen's Hall, Hexham.
- The Queen's Hall building is a magnificent early Victorian building which faces Hexham Abbey (dating from 647AD). From its christening as an arts centre in 1983 until the hand over to the charitable organisation, Queens Hall Arts, in 2001 the building was under local authority control.
- Queen's Hall Arts Centre boasts a 350-seat theatre and two galleries managed by Queen's Hall Arts.
- Queen's Hall has established itself as a strong base for an extensive range of artistic activity, attracting the best international and national artists from music, drama,

dance and national touring comedy to non professional shows put on by local community groups.

- In addition to activity in the building, QHA delivers an extensive outreach programme bringing workshops and performances to communities throughout Northumberland.
- QHA receives regular financial support from Northumberland County Council and Arts Council England.

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