Dark times for theatres under EU bulb rules

Jack Mason

Theatre lamps are going out all over Europe and we shall not see them lit again in London or any other part of Britain since new EU environmental legislation, the ban of the National Theatre has said.

Robin Norris, his artistic director said that restrictions on traditional use of LED lighting due to the brake on 2020 would make all theatres lighting equipment redundant. He estimated that the cost to Britain of replacing it would be £1.2 billion.

He is supporting a campaign to halt the European Working Plan, with which the EU is scheduled to enact in October before the official date of Brexit on March 29

next year. Even if Britain was able to opt out of the plan, which prohibits the manufacture of bulbs that generate less than 85 lumens of light for each watt of energy consumed, it is likely that manufacturers would find it economical to make bulbs only for British theatres.

Norris said that the legislation, proposed at the moment would affect everything that the theatre did, including the production of War Horse and The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, which rely on innovative lighting effects. The theatre's production of The Mousetrap created its atmosphere with 3,500 hanging bulbs and its adaptation of the Elf Network relied on a cold stage. If all the colours were washed out "Really the issue is much bigger than that because even the LED lights that were replacing our stock would also be non-compliant. So by 2020 you can't then buy new stock. We would have a certain amount in the cupboard that would keep going for some time, but when you run out of that, you are left with equipment that's just scrub and this would severely damage theatres because they would be unable to afford new equipment. It's back to candles," he said. "It's really drastic.

Current regulations include an exemption for theatres but the draft legislation does not. A campaign by the Association of Lighting Designers against the new restrictions has received support from performers including Judi Dench and Dame Helen Mirren and Dame David Hare, the playwright. Sir Cameron Mackintosh, whose company Billington Mackintosh controls nine theatres in the West End, said: "This is a serious matter for everyone in the industry as it will affect audiences and practitioners. A solution must be found. The financial contribution of the arts to the European economy is enormous."

Púlpic Cloudrider, who was one of the winners of the Olivier awards for his lighting designs on productions including War Horse, said that the law would mean that the Phantom of the Opera would be "more like a box of chocolates. The stage would be the same but it wouldn't work."

Mr. Norris said that the new regulations would be a "disaster" and there was nothing on the market for theatres that would reach the new standard. "You can understand why this legislation has come about," he added. "In every area of life we need to be driving forward with energy reduction, but this legislation is going to have a huge knock-on effect."

War Horse and The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time, left, rely on lighting that the National Theatre would not be able to afford under new rules.

Weighing pupils cuts obesity in city trial

Charity Smyth, Health Editor

Every primary school child should be weighed annually, experts have said after a scheme in Manchester showed that it stopped children getting fatter.

Pupils whose parents were given annual weight reports were more likely to maintain a healthy weight and tended to decrease their body mass index between readings, while that of children outside the programme rose.

The children's health and monitoring programme (CHAMP) was set up three years ago and weighs 65,000 children a year. Its results are being studied by ministers, who are planning a national plan to tackle childhood obesity.

Parents get the results by text message and an online portal that connects them with school advice, who will talk to concerned families about healthy eating.

You can normalise the size of your children because you see them every day," Jenny Mcgrory, the head teacher of St Mary's primary in Moss Side said. "It's when you actually see how much less they are when you switch it on that it makes your life easier to find things to eat for them.

"With the right advice you can make some tiny changes, it's very practical, non-judgemental conversations.

A national child measurement programme would weigh children when they start and leave primary school, during which time the number who are obese double. The deputy chief executive of Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, Gill Hetherington, who founded CHAMP, said: "It becomes more normal for us to think that because we only weighed children at reception and year six, the intervening years were a complete wilderness. As children get older their habits are formed and it's much harder to break them when they are bigger or older."

The National Obesity Forum, said "Manchester is showing the rest of the UK how to follow. All children should be weighed at least twice a year, as this is the only way to assess their health and well-being."

But the government has said that it would be difficult to roll out a wider scheme. "This was an innovation project," the education minister said, "We are not recommending that all pupils in all schools are weighed."