

## **Grand Opera House Announces New Chief Executive**

Michael Ockwell has been appointed Chief Executive at the Grand Opera House.

Michael will take up his new post early next year, taking over from John Botteley, who announced his retirement in June.

Anna Carragher, Chair of the Grand Opera House Trust said;

“I’m delighted to announce this excellent appointment. Michael has a wealth of theatre experience, joining us from his current role as Managing Director of HQ Theatres, part of the Qdos Entertainment Group, where he has responsibility for their portfolio of seven regional theatres. Michael will take up his new position early next year and I know that the theatre’s audiences, its staff and Trustees will give Michael and his family the known Northern Irish welcome. I look forward to Michael joining us and I know he will lead the Grand Opera House forward as Northern Ireland’s premier presenting theatre and one of the city’s foremost attractions both for people here and visitors to Northern Ireland.”

Michael began his theatre career as a successful actor in both stage and television before moving into theatre management with Stoll Moss Theatres. Michael started as House Manager at the London Palladium and took over as Theatre Manager of the Gielgud Theatre, Shaftesbury Avenue looking after the operation of one of London’s premier drama houses. He joined Hetherington Seelig Theatres as Operations Manager at Wycombe Swan before being appointed Chief Executive when the Wyvern Theatre joined HST. Michael became Managing Director of HQ Theatres with the successful tender for the operation of Southend Theatres and looked after HQT’s portfolio of seven regional theatres including the Cliffs Pavilion, Palace Theatre Westcliff, The Orchard Theatre Dartford, The Beck Theatre Hayes and White Rock Theatre Hastings.

Michael Ockwell said;

“I am absolutely delighted to be joining the Grand Opera House and look forward to working with the Trust and the theatre’s excellent team. This is one of the most prestigious arts roles in Northern Ireland and I feel honoured and excited to lead the organisation. Both my family and I have been thrilled by the warmth of the welcome we have received so far and we are all looking forward to our move to Northern Ireland.”

Congratulating Mike on his appointment, Nick Thomas, Chairman of Qdos Entertainment Plc, said:

"Since 2006, when the company was formed, Mike Ockwell has been central to the growth and success of HQ Theatres, the theatres division of Qdos

Entertainment. He is a true professional with a real feeling for what makes theatres popular with audiences. Our loss is Northern Ireland's gain - but I shall look forward enthusiastically to continuing to work with Mike on our hugely popular Qdos pantomimes which we stage at the Grand Opera House."

Roisín McDonough, Chief Executive of the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, commented:

"On behalf of the Arts Council, I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the huge contribution that John Botteley has made to the Grand Opera House during his period of tenure. He will be greatly missed.

However, it is a pleasure to be able to welcome the new Chief Executive Michael Ockwell into this important position, managing what is one of Northern Ireland's most significant arts and culture venues. I wish him every success in his new role."