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cinema theatre gallery

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PRESS RELEASE: 10 October 2011

Wyeside Announces New Theatre

Bulth Wells' Wyeside Arts Centre has secured substantial grants to refurbish its famous Market Theatre.

The Market Hall was last upgraded nearly 20 years ago: the new works will enhance the audience's experience with new seating arranged in one continuous tier, improved lighting, and redevelopment of the arrangement of the space. This will result in much more flexibility to create a space for different activities and increased operating efficiency. Wyeside will be able to run a broader programme of workshops and community events, provide improved staging possibilities for the actors, dancers and musicians who perform there. Film-goers will also benefit from the improvements in both seating comfort and acoustics.

The £190,000 project is being funded by grants from the **Aggregates Levy Fund for Wales, Powys County Council, the Foyle Foundation, the Friends of Wyeside** and other anonymous donors (see information for editors). Members of the Board and staff of Wyeside worked closely with Powys County Council to identify sources of funding and apply for grants.

The Market Theatre will be closed from January to March 2012. But the centre will stay open throughout, with a full cinema programme in the Castle Cinema and other 'winter warmer' events in the Gallery and Foyer.

Wyeside Chairperson, Barbara Stow said,

"The new Market Theatre will give audiences a much more comfortable and enjoyable experience in this wonderfully intimate space.

"We're all feeling really confident about the future. The support we've had from the community, from funders and other arts organisations over the past 18 months has encouraged us to make lots of plans for the cinema and live events, and for a fuller community programme (including drama for young people), so Wyeside remains a great place to take the family."

"This is fantastic news!" said **Robyn Lewis, Builth High School's Drama Teacher**. "The Market is a unique performance space, and a real asset to the town. We had a great time doing 'The Wizard of Oz' there last year – our kids think the space is just fab! It's great to know we can go on putting on shows there, as well as bringing groups to see films and live events in such a wonderful setting."

Designer returns to Builth

Chris Baldwin of ACT Consultants has been appointed to design and manage the theatre redevelopment. This is a case of history coming full circle.

In 1976 Chris was appointed by Donald Pryse Jones, the inspirational first Chair of Wyeside, to manage the conversion of the Market Hall Buildings to create Wyeside Arts Centre.



Chris is now a distinguished theatre consultant who has worked on new theatres in Wrexham, Nottingham, Northampton, Wolverhampton, Trinidad and Cambridge, and on the refurbishment of theatre spaces in Berlin, Oporto and Frankfurt.

Chris says: “The Wyeseide building, and the Market Theatre in particular, have a unique character that both performers and audiences find irresistible – the management team and Wyeseide supporters are to be applauded for sustaining and developing Donald Jones’ vision for the arts in mid-Wales”

Restoration of the Wyeseide building

The Market refurbishment is not the only way Wyeseide is being improved. Earlier this year, scaffolding surrounded the famous landmark building so specialist masons could repair decorative stonework on its façade. This major step was part-funded by a Powys County Council Community Enablement Grant: but Wyeseide’s tireless Friends organisation – led by its **Chair, Wendy Evans** - still had to match the grant by raising 50% of the costs.

“When the market hall was first built in 1877, it was the height of fashion to be seen entering its elegant doors” said Wendy. “We want to ensure Wyeseide’s dramatic architecture – which is familiar to virtually everyone in Wales – looks good for many years to come. This will be a 5-year project –we’ve made a start, but there’s much more to do and we still need more people to help our fundraising effort by ‘Sponsoring a Stone’.”

To find out how you can support the restoration by ‘sponsoring a stone’ see Wyeseide’s website to donate online or pick up a form from the Wyeseide Box Office.

Ends

Information for Editors (next page)



Funding

Wyeside is grateful to the following funders for their generous support for the Market Theatre refurbishment:

- The Aggregates Levy Fund for Wales administered by the Welsh Assembly Government for a grant of £115,000
- The Foyle Foundation for a grant of £25,000
- Powys County Council for a capital grant of £15,000 under the Community Regeneration & Development Fund
- The Friends of Wyeside for a donation of up to £11,000

Friends of Wyeside

Wyeside is supported by the community, by volunteers who give of their free time and by the Friends who help with fund-raising activities. All these people are passionate about Wyeside. Its existence is often cited as one of the reasons people have decided to move to, or move back to, Builth Wells.

Membership of the Friends covers a large catchment area, as the only comparable venues (ie with performance space, cinema and gallery), are in Ludlow or Aberystwyth. Friends are tireless in their fund raising efforts; as well as special events held for this purpose, over 80 Friends donate a sum monthly or annually.

Wendy Evans, a member of the Board and Chair of the Friends of Wyeside said:

“In Builth Wells we are fortunate to have a wonderful Arts Centre, housed in an historic and elegant building which was bequeathed to the town by a generous lady in 1900, so that the townspeople could be entertained in lovely surroundings.



Over the years the Arts Centre has become a hub of activity: the young, middle-aged and elderly all participating in a wide range of arts. Local schools, Young Farmers' clubs and Community Theatre group have had the opportunity to use the professional facilities, learning many new skills, as well as having a great time. The Wyeseide has provided for us a wonderfully varied programme of first class drama, world music and dance – enriching our lives here in Mid Wales. In addition we have the added benefit of a cinema, which has shown films since the earliest days of the silent movies – a wonderful achievement.”

Forthcoming highlights at Wyeseide

As well as a full programme of films, Wyeseide has a varied live programme for the autumn season. For more information about upcoming shows please contact Marketing Officer Helen Baynham:

Email: marketing@wyeseide.co.uk

Tel: 01982 553668

Or visit Wyeseide's website which carries full show listings:

www.wyeseide.co.uk or our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/pages/Wyeseide-Arts-Centre/117385517546

For more information about the Market Theatre project contact:

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