

MY PERSONAL APPEAL TO NOT CLOSE TITCHFIELD FESTIVAL THEATRE'S NEW 400+ SEATER STAGE

GENERAL

I believe Titchfield Festival Theatre (TFT) does more for the local community than almost any other voluntary organisation. With Hampshire county council cutting back on arts funding, it is surprising they appear determined to kill an arts outlet costing the tax payer nothing but providing numerous benefits.

Unlike the update to Fernham hall, an existing building already funded by the local tax payer and costing a further reputed £350,000 a year to run together with a reported rebuild cost of £15,000,000, excluding indirect costs, TFT is self-funding.

It provides drama and musical theatre to children and adult audiences as well as giving members of the community the opportunity to perform. Additionally, it provides acting classes for children, teenagers and adults and musical education either free or at a nominal cost.

With ticket prices of around £11-£13, it is barely the same cost as a visit to the cinema whilst tickets at the local Ashcroft centre, run by FBC and apparently about to be closed due to lack of funds, typically cost 40% more. If FBC cannot make the Ashcroft centre pay, is it credible that they will be able to make a larger establishment pay?

TFT's current program for 2024 includes over thirty different drama performances including both dramas and musicals. The dramas range from 'The importance of being Earnest', 'Wind in the Willows', 'Spiders web' to 'The comings and goings at No. 10', the latter being written by a member of TFT. For children, there are the 'Little red hen' and 'The gingerbread man'.

None of this would be possible without the 600 or so volunteers who perform, staff the front of house and build the sets.

OTHER ACTIVITIES & BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Other benefits to the community include giving the opportunity to perform to young aspiring actors as well as those of more mature years such as myself. Performing in front of an audience involves discipline and invokes team spirit to youngsters. Whilst the majority of actors will never go on to be professionals, some certainly do. One person who worked for the NHS and retired a few years ago is now appearing in the West End while others have gone on to drama schools. There are others who have been to drama school but who do not want to act professionally and volunteer their talents. How often do we hear from youngsters that there is nothing to do locally?

Acting classes for children to teenagers at minimal cost .

BTEC courses.

Practical experience in stage management, lighting design and operation.

REASONS TO KEEP THE NEW STAGE OPEN AT TFT

FBC and HCC main objection seems to be based on car parking or relative lack of it. However, compared to other local theatres such as the Kings in Portsmouth which has no parking of its own, there is parking at TFT although more would be a great benefit. At TFT, there is additional parking at St. Margaret's nursery some ten metres away . I understand TFT have made numerous requests to lease or buy one or both of the unused adjacent fields owned by HCC. Apparently, they are deemed unsuitable by HCC because they are presumably being kept for something else. But they appear to have done nothing with them for over ten years. I live in an area previously designated countryside for which FBC has now allowed development for over 1,000 new houses!

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

My interest is simply as a member of the public and an occasional performer.