

Protecting theatres for everyone



Ref.: TC/1299

10 August 2022

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Plas Y Ffynnon
Cambrian Way
Brecon
LD3 7HP

By e-mail: planning.enquiries@beacons-npa.gov.uk

Application: 22/21227/FUL

Site: Theatr Brycheiniog Canal Road Brecon LD3 7EW

Proposal: Proposed new draft doors, new windows, remove canopies, new shipping container as an ice cream vendor unit, new glazed link to shipping container, painted graphic on entrance bay

Remit:

Theatres Trust is the National Advisory Body for Theatres and was established by The Theatres Trust Act 1976 'to promote the better protection of theatres'. The Trust is a statutory consultee in the planning system and local planning authorities in Wales are required to consult the Trust on planning applications for '*development involving any land on which there is a theatre*', '*residential development within 50 metres of a theatre*' as well as for proposed theatres. The definition of theatres within the Act defines a theatre as 'any building or part of a building constructed wholly or mainly for the public performance of plays', and therefore applies to theatres, playhouses, arts centres, ciné-varieties or buildings converted for theatre use, old and new, in other uses or disused.

Comment:

This application for planning permission has come to the attention of the Trust through press reports because it is seeking external alterations at Theatr Brycheiniog. We have not been directly notified despite this falling within our statutory remit outlined above.

Theatr Brycheiniog was developed with funding from the European Regional Development Fund and the Arts Council of Wales's lottery scheme, constructed in red brick with Welsh slate roof and timber projections in the style of a canal warehouse to sensitively reflect its setting and the traditional Brecon building style. It became the first partially solar-powered theatre in Wales in 2007 when PV panels were installed to its roof. It is a well-equipped theatre technically and has a flat-floored square auditorium with seating on three levels offering flexible capacities, formats and configurations. It is a multi-purpose facility with rehearsal studio which can operate as conference

Theatres Trust

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Chair Dave Moutrey **Director** Jon Morgan

Trustees Paul Cartwright, James Dacre, Suba Das, Stephanie Hall, Annie Hampson, Richard Johnston, Gary Kemp, Lucy Osborne, Jane Spiers, Truda Spruyt, Katie Town

The National Advisory Public Body for Theatres

The Theatres Trust Charitable Fund co-operates with the Theatres Trust, has the same Trustees and is registered as a charity under number 274697

or function space. The theatre is an important arts and cultural facility for Brecon and its surrounding communities.

These plans seek additions, alterations and refurbishments to front of house areas. These appear to be predominantly focussed on enhancing and expanding the theatre's food and drink offer. Internally the existing cafe/foyer area will be opened up with removal of an existing partition, this should improve audience and visitor flow. An external shipping container will be added to the western end of the north elevation which is stated to serve as an ice cream vendor but potentially could also provide other light snacks and drinks. To the western end will be an area of external seating enclosed by removable planters.

This will have the benefit of diversifying sources of income generation to support the theatre's important arts and cultural programme, attract additional visitors to broaden engagement and optimise use of the building outside of performance times. From a placemaking perspective the external seating and planters will help to activate the Canal Basin and enhance setting. A number of proposals of this nature have come forward in the last few years across the UK with ancillary income becoming vital in supporting the viability and financial sustainability of venues. Therefore we are supportive of these proposals.

There will be infill around the entrance below the timber projection with side glass screens and aluminium entrance doors. The existing plans and elevations do not appear to show a door at this location, although external images of the building available online show there to be some in place. Nonetheless we have no objections to this design and operationally it should maintain appropriate working conditions for staff with there being a reception/box office desk immediately inside.

The addition of high-level signage to the timber projection as well as low-level signage to this elevation's eastern end will help improve the theatre's visibility and prominence. From images available it appears that existing signage is minimal and due to its industrial character would not necessarily be obvious to visitors to the area as a theatre.

Policy 51 of the Brecon Beacons National Park Local Development Plan permits development and extension to theatres subject to conditions which we consider this proposal to accord with. Supporting the ongoing success of the theatre is beneficial for the social and cultural wellbeing of local people and for the town's visitor offer which contributes to its economy. We consider these works to support the theatre's function and to contribute positively to its setting. Therefore we are supportive of the granting of planning permission.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you wish to discuss these comments further.



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