

20 March 2009

Westport performing arts venue one step closer

A new performing arts centre is a step closer as plans are finalized ready for tender.

Key users met with architect Glenn Brebner yesterday, to view the revisions made to reflect feedback received at a public meeting in November and at individual meetings with users.

In June 2008 the Council resolved that the Community Hall on Palmerston Street was the preferred site to convert into a new performing arts venue. Plans were drawn up for the conversion and feedback from the public was considered by Councillors at the November 2008 Council meeting. Issues surrounding backstage space, storage, seating, stage configurations and kitchen services have been considered over the past three and a half months, and revisions designed to address all the needs.

The resulting plans are a collaboration of input from experts in relevant fields and the public feedback, and represent an exciting new venue for the district.

“As well as the public meetings, key users have had an opportunity to discuss the project and design with both the architect, theatre manager and theatre technician, in order to ensure the design will provide the most workable solutions for the widest number of users,” says Bruce Middleton, Theatre Manager. “Performers may have different requirements from musicians, the ballet may have a different wish list from the orchestra. The meetings have been about coming up with solutions that take into account the wide range of users and the many different uses that the venue will have.”

Participants are excited at the plans and keen to see the project get underway.

“We are thrilled with the input we have been able to have with the project, and are pleased that Council is working to ensure minimal disruption to regular events,” says Carol Keoghan. “The 2009 Competitions will be held in the Community hall in April, and with luck, the conversion will be complete in time to enable us to hold them in the new venue next year.”

Expressions of interest have been called for the project, and tenders are expected in April. Construction is planned to commence following the 2009 Best of the West and Annual Competitions.

ENDS



**Further information; Trish Casey (Manager – Community & Environment)
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Attached photo: Attending yesterdays meeting are (from left to right), Peter Doncliff (On Stage Productions), Michael Doncliff, Beryl Collins (School of Dance), Frank Dooley, Glen Brebner (Architect), Cr. Lynley Roberts, Alan Whitnell (Best of the West), Graham Mason (Westport Municipal Band), Carol Keoghan (Competitions).