

News release

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Full council agree to award the theatre management contract for the Castle Theatre to Parkwood Creative Ltd.

All the world's a stage....

...and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances..

Wellingborough Council is pleased to announce the next exciting stage of the Castle Theatre's history, with the entrance of experienced national theatre professionals - Parkwood Creative - as the new operators of the borough's theatre.

After a rigorous and lengthy tender process to find someone who could run the theatre in the way local people have said they want it, the council is convinced that the award of this contract for the next 10-15 years is a positive step.

When the Castle closed in June 2016 - because the company running it went into Administration - the council were prepared, had a plan to re-open, and stepped in to keep it going. We also spent a great deal of time talking to everyone who had views about its future. There was enthusiasm from the long-standing Friends of the Castle, as well as many other community groups and individuals. We appreciated the input from everyone concerned and took to heart the message which came through very clearly - that it should be a local theatre for local people.

The tender documentation we put out was based on the need for those views to be taken into account. The council made it clear that it was willing to provide a reasonable subsidy to support that, so we are pleased that Parkwood's plans include talking to individuals and groups who are interested in being part of the theatre's life.

The contract will start in January 2019, so the next few months will see the introduction of the new company to the venue, the staff and the local community. The council has committed capital to the improvement of the building and how that money will be spent for the benefit of the theatre will be the subject of discussions with Parkwood. It is likely we will focus on improvements to seats, curtains and internal decorations. Work has already started on external repairs and decorations, as well as improvements to sound, lighting, heating and improved facilities for customers.

The council wishes to extend thanks to local catering company Franks, who have been working with us throughout the last two years, providing an excellent food offering whilst - at the same time – helping with the day to day running of the building. Parkwood have their own catering service so Franks will be moving out of the Castle, but they have been an asset to the venue and the council sincerely hopes that they will continue to have a presence in Wellingborough if they can find a new home.

Cllr Martin Griffiths, Leader of the Council, said “It has been a long and difficult journey since the theatre closed its doors nearly two years ago, and without the dedication and commitment of members and officers of the council - and particularly the team at the theatre - we would not be where we are today. I am confident that the time it’s taken to find the right operator for our theatre has been worthwhile.

Councillors felt very strongly that they wanted to see the Castle survive and succeed, and everything I have seen from Parkwood has reassured me that will be the case. We are very much looking forward to working with our new operator who already has some ideas and exciting plans to improve the venue and make it truly a theatre for the people of the borough.”

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The Borough Council of Wellingborough’s mission statement is:

Making Wellingborough a place to be proud of

Our priorities are:

- P**romoting high quality growth
- R**educing crime and anti-social behaviour
- I**mproving life chances for young people
- D**elivering efficient and responsive services
- E**nhancing the environment