

Wokingham Theatre – Mission Statement

The Rules of Wokingham Theatre state:

“The object of the Society is to promote the enjoyment of all aspects of Theatre in Wokingham and district, and provide facilities for its members to participate in such activities. This will include, subject to demand, a Youth Theatre section.”

Wokingham Theatre is a thriving amateur repertory group presenting 8 major productions a year alongside Youth Theatre productions. The auditorium is also used for occasional productions by other theatre groups and for non-theatrical use as varied as talks about arts and hair-dressing training.

Founded in 1947, the group is a registered charity and our purpose has always been to promote the enjoyment of theatre in the community in Wokingham. The theatre is staffed entirely by volunteers who give their time and skills to support all aspects of our operation. The theatre is managed by a volunteer Board of Directors elected from the membership by democratic vote each year.

With consistently high standards Wokingham Theatre has built itself an enviable reputation for the quality of its productions and, with approaching full houses for most of its performances, it is amongst the most successful of amateur theatres in the country.

Membership The Theatre is a membership organisation. Membership has grown over the last few years and currently stands at 340.

Productions The Theatre currently presents 8 'main' productions a season, each running for 10 nights. In addition, we present a Youth Theatre show and other one-night offerings. Average tickets sales are 95% of capacity with some productions selling out.

Current Theatre Use The existing spaces within the Theatre are under intense use. Other than the stage the only 'rehearsal' space is the Bar/Foyer (also used by the Youth Theatre). With three shows routinely in rehearsal at any one time this creates real scheduling difficulties and often requires the use of other spaces off-site.

Whilst most rehearsals are in the evening the theatre building is also in regular use during the day time. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, a substantial body of members are involved in set construction, costume making, other production activities as well as others who are involved in the routine administration and maintenance of the Theatre and its fabric.

Social Activity As noted above the Theatre offers opportunities for those of all ages to involve themselves throughout the week contributing, and learning, a wide range of theatre skills. There is also a significant social aspect to this, not only in the set building and costume teams, but other members just dropping in for a coffee and chat. Recently an 'Old Stagers' group has been formed for members who are no longer active in the day to day running of the theatre but wish to keep in touch.

The Theatre also has a Social Club that organises member events such as Social evenings where member just meet for a chat, quiz nights as well as Summer BBQ and Christmas party.

Support for Local Charities The Theatre actively supports local charities. For 'main' productions, the tickets for the first night are donated to local charities, or local branches of national charities. Not only do the charities receive the income from the ticket sales, but they also run the evening as a fund raising event with their own raffle, etc. Charities that we plan to support this year include The Cowshed, The 41 Club, Easthampstead Rotarians, The Samaritans & The Duchess of Kent Hospice, Windsor. The theatre also supports the Wokingham Lions by making the auditorium available, free of charge, for 4 comedy nights each year.

Support is also provided for other events in Cantley Park area such as the Wokingham Half Marathon and the annual fireworks event.

Youth Theatre Wokingham Youth Theatre (WYT) is a vibrant opportunity for young people to become involved with and learn the skills and techniques of theatre. Currently the membership stands at 70 and there is a waiting list.

One of WYT's 'unique selling points' is the chance for children to get a taste of all aspects of an operational theatre and the children are encouraged to learn about the technical aspects of a show (sound and lighting) and what happens backstage through tutor and in-house lead classes and workshops (when possible), with the aim of making this an all-round experience for children who have a real taste for theatre.

Depending on the productions being performed as part of the main season, there are also opportunities for Youth Theatre students to take roles in these productions.

Currently WYT only has limited access to the stage because of the pressure of use by the main productions. With the proposed Studio Theatre, we will be able to offer substantially better opportunities for this vital part of our community. In addition, using the Studio block will simplify and strengthen the safeguarding procedures for Youth Theatre members. We regard these as a major benefit of our proposals.

Future Use. Each year we receive requests from local groups such as dance schools and choirs to hire our theatre space but we usually have to turn these down as the set for the next 'main' production is under construction on the stage. With the studio space available we hope to be able to accommodate some of these requests.

Accessibility The Theatre is aware that the existing building does have some limitations for those with disabilities. It is particularly satisfying that the proposals being put forward will offer good access to all parts of the Theatre.

Existing Consent There is an existing Planning Consent for extensive changes to the theatre (major remodelling of the existing building plus construction of workshops and studio). The current application will supersede that Consent.