

# Long Term Plan 2018-28 Submissions Overview – Theatre Royal redevelopment

## Issue 2 – To be or not to be? – Theatre Royal Redevelopment

The Consultation Document proposes the following three options, with Council indicating a preference for Option 3 – Upgrading both the back and front of house foyer area of the Theatre.

### 1 Just leave the Theatre Royal as it is

Retain the Theatre Royal at its current standard with no upgrading work. This would not cost, but does mean less income from shows unable to run at the facility and

restricts the types of shows that could use the Theatre in the future, reducing its attractiveness as a venue and cultural drawcard.

### 2 Upgrade just the “Behind the Scenes” facilities

Improve the Theatre Royal by upgrading the “Behind the Scenes” back of house facilities, plus the auditorium floor and seating, at a total capital cost of \$8.7M.

The upgrading could start in 2018/19, and would take up to 3 years to complete (9 months planning with 18-month construction period).

### 3 Upgrade both “Behind the Scenes” AND the “Front of House” foyer area

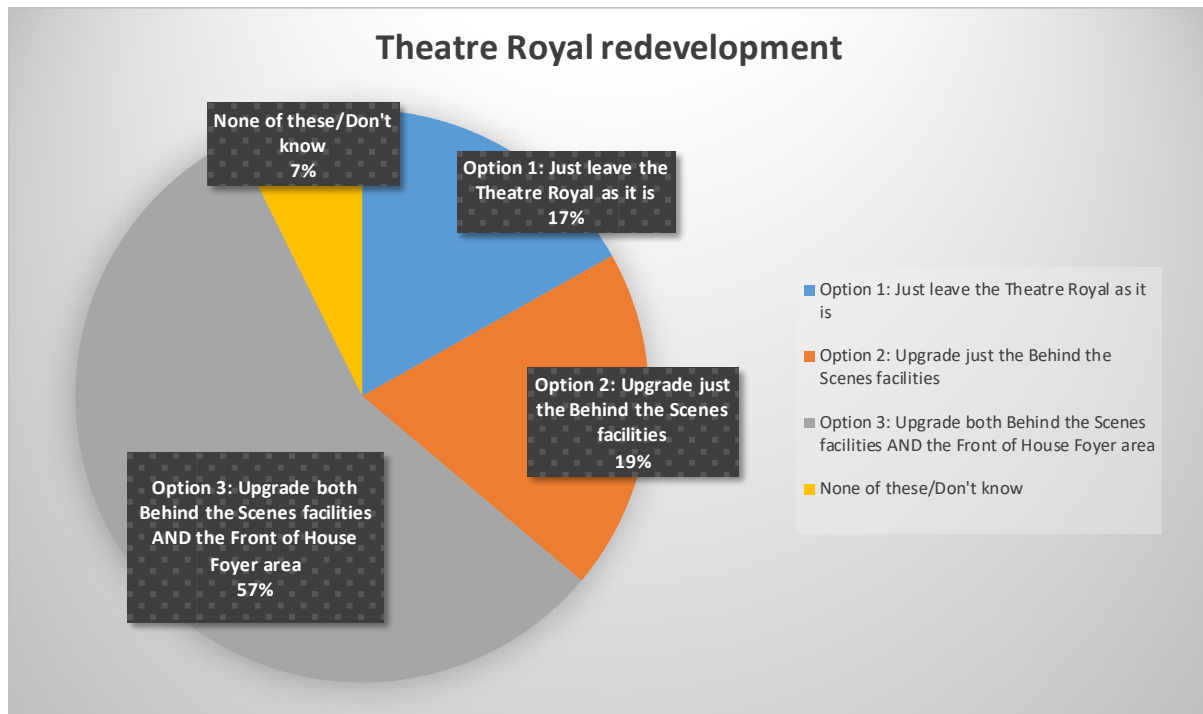
Upgrading the “Behind the Scenes” back of house and “Front of House” Foyer facilities at a total capital cost of \$11.8M.

Incorporating the Front of House Foyer area upgrade adds a further \$2.5M capital cost to the upgrading.

This upgrade option would still likely commence in 2018/19 and take approximately 3 years to complete.

Potentially, it would be designed in conjunction with the possible Heritage Facility development proposed in the vicinity of the Theatre Royal, but would likely be constructed separately to this project if it went ahead.

534 submitters responded to this question – with preferences indicated in the graph below:



## Overview

- 1 Submitter views on the Theatre upgrade ranged from those who support a total upgrade to those who see no value in any upgrading.
- 2 *"It would be crazy to not do the whole thing at once, and attract MORE people to the area, and the knock-on effect to the entire economy is a logical side effect."*
- 3 *"The Theatre Royal is the heart of live performance in South Canterbury. At a time when we are losing our heritage buildings we must preserve the ones we can for future generations. But it must be used to survive. The Theatre must be upgraded if it is to be of any use to touring and local productions. A thriving theatre, music and dance scene is integral to a thriving and healthy community."*
- 4 *"This town places a very high priority on sports and those facilities, while the arts have been largely ignored. Many students who do not excel academically or at sports have found a niche in the arts, in theatre or music. It is important to show these students that their passions are valued contributions to society by providing a safe, clean, and excellent facility for them to use. The arts are just as important, if not more than sports in society. They teach teamwork, and persistence, and hard work, but they also teach empathy, confidence, problem solving and so much more."*
- 5 *Timaruvians are also missing out on huge opportunities to experience theatre, music and dance. The condition of the theatre has put off many organisations from stopping in Timaru on their tours, instead choosing towns like Oamaru and Ashburton, who have modern, and easily workable and accessible theatres. Timaruvians deserve the opportunity to experience more theatre without the hassle and expense of travel."*

- 6 *"This is one of our jewels in the crown in South Canterbury. It is vitally important to upgrade it."*
- 7 The above comments are examples of those who support Council's preferred option of upgrading both "Behind the Scenes" and the "Front of House" foyer area. Much of the support stemmed from views that the building is an iconic heritage building, the value of the arts to the community, upgrading will foster the development of a heritage/cultural precinct, belief the upgrade will increase the number & range of shows, and increase patronage, while revitalising the south end of the Timaru CBD. Many of the submitters who supported Option 3 also expressed support for the concept of a cultural/heritage hub in the vicinity of the Theatre Royal.
- 8 Those who supported only the upgrade of the back of house elements expressed views like:
- 9 *"We are missing out on shows that places like Ashburton and Oamaru are getting because of the inadequate 'behind the scenes' facilities. This needs to be done urgently but I think the added expense for what is an adequate foyer area is not justified."*
- 10 *"I certainly agree with option 2 - that the Theatre Royal be upgraded behind the scenes. For a number of years, theatre goers have been deprived of many shows due to the lack of facilities backstage. The Royal New Zealand Ballet is a case in point- while we still get to see their small shows aimed at the smaller centres such as Twizel, Wanaka etc they no longer bring their major shows here yet the Russian Ballet brought a brilliant show to the theatre last year. Oamaru has had its Opera House renovated and we are losing shows to them. Once Oamaru theatregoers came up to Timaru. The theatre foyer is fine for the present, although some attention needs to be given to the state of the lift, given we have so many theatre goers can no longer manage the stairs. Its existence is not known by many people except when they get to hear it creaking its way up to the circle. Please consider the elderly folk in Timaru."*
- 11 Those who did not support any upgrading at the Theatre expressed views including that it will not increase patronage or visitors to the district; that this type of project is not a priority for rates funding, and any upgrade should be user pays. For example:
- 12 *"The theatre is an asset as is. There is little evidence that upgrading will increase usage. Big spending will hurt ratepayers to achieve a "like to have" rather than a "must have."*
- 13 *"I genuinely do not understand why you would spend money on something that is very much 'a nice to have' - and not even a nice to have for most people, more a nice to have for a minority, when there are real need to have priorities that need funding, the ratepayer should not have to pay for a building that will never be big enough to host anything other than regional shows"*
- 14 *"Would rather have the money spent on developing new water bores"*

## Schools Feedback - Summary

The table indicates the option selected by the majority of students:

School	Option 1 Leave	Option 2 Back of House	Option 3 Both Back and Front of House
Geraldine High School			✓
Timaru Boys High School			✓
Opihi College			✓
Craighead			✓ essential bits only
Mountainview High School			✓
Timaru Girls High School			✓
Roncalli College		✓	

### Key points:

- Iconic part of Timaru/cool building/has a lot of potential
- Upgrading would attract more shows/activities
- Important to have nice buildings around the Theatre
- Like the idea of livening up the south end
- A front of house upgrade will send a message to the people of Timaru that something has changed and it is worth visiting
- Cultural investment is worthwhile
- Incorporate a movie theatre – in a break out room

## Topics/Sub-topics for Officer Comment (from Submitter Comments)

### 1) Upgrade suggestions – current site

- Add concert venue
- Develop as per Isaac Theatre
- Back of house detail
- Upgrade details – general
- Disability access & facilities for performers
- Extend area to incorporate more facilities
- Heating
- Retain heritage features
- Retain Iconic building
- Lift
- Plans for wing space beside stage
- Retain façade and rebuild behind
- Seating to be replaced

- Timing of upgrade
- Use Professional Theatre Designers

**Officer comment:**

- 15 The Back of House (BOH) is seen as the first priority. The Front of House (FOH) improvements are seen as important and have been planned to occur at the same time as the BOH to minimise costs and minimise the disruption for the users of the facility. The timing for the upgrade has been calculated to allow for comprehensive planning to occur before the theatre is closed to minimise the disruption to users. It is not possible to undertake the upgrade earlier. Consultation with users on the timeframe for the closure will occur as part of the planning.
- 16 Further consultation with theatre users will occur prior to the upgrade occurring. Items that have been mentioned by submitters will be investigated and incorporated into the planning process as appropriate. Matters that are already planned that have been highlighted by submitters such as a passenger lift, disabled access, new seating, retaining heritage features, improved bathroom facilities and increased technology have all been incorporated into the proposal.
- 17 The previous upgrade to the FOH occurred in 1992/93. The majority of this area will be retained with the major work happening on the northern side. The FOH upgrade would provide an expanded area that would allow enhanced toilet, kitchen, bar and ticketing facilities. Additional space would allow the area to be used for small groups for a variety of purposes. This space would also be accessible by the proposed heritage facility. The details of the design of the FOH expansion have not been completed as yet. It is not expected that this area would be used as a concert venue or as a small theatre as submitters have mentioned.
- 18 Professional theatre designers will be used in the design and project management of the upgrade.

**2) Upgrade suggestions - alternative site**

- Build a new facility
- New site
- New cultural facility - north of current theatre site
- New multipurpose facility including conferences - Bay
- Relocate theatre to museum site
- Relocate to Caroline Bay & link with outdoor arena

**Officer comment:**

- 19 Upgrade of the Theatre Royal has been proposed, rather than a new facility on a new site, due to the costs involved with building a new facility and the consequent loss of the existing heritage building. It would also be difficult to get

a site of sufficient size and suitable location. The museum site or Caroline Bay would not be suitable due to restrictions on these sites.

- 20 Inclusion of a conference facility has not been included on the Theatre Royal site as external advices has indicated that this is not the best location for a conference facility and that it is not necessary for a conference facility to be co-located with a theatre.

### 3) Management matters

- Marketing
- User pays
- Use local contractors
- Service provided to touring companies
- Financial management
- Reduce hire costs
- Privatised the activity and facility

#### ***Officer comment:***

- 21 Operational matters such as increased marketing and provision of support services will be reviewed as part of this project and the heritage facility project. It is not expected that it would be viable to privatise the activity.
- 22 User charges will also be reviewed for the facility, but will be based on the Revenue and Financing Policy of the Council. Currently under this policy, it is targeted that 0-10% of the costs of the facility are recovered via user charges.
- 23 Community funding towards the cost of the upgrade has been included in the proposal. Other sources of funding are loans and Council reserves.

### 4) Parking

- Parking options need to be considered

#### ***Officer comment:***

Parking enhancement will be considered as part of the upgrades.

### 5) Cultural/Heritage precinct

- Revitalise south end

#### ***Officer comment:***

- 24 Comments are noted and it is considered that the Theatre Royal upgrade and the heritage facility will substantially enhance the southern end of Stafford Street.

## 6) CBD Master Plan

- Develop CBD Master Plan first

### ***Officer comment:***

- 25 The Timaru CBD Group Inc have indicated a cost of \$200,000 (GST excl) to prepare an urban master plan. Prior to committing to that level of funding officers could report back to Council with a range of options to identify the objectives and scope of an urban master plan, and the potential effect of other issues, such as the Earthquake Prone Building legislation, on the CBD. Following the officers' report a decision on whether to proceed and if so the timing and amount of the required funding can be decided at that point. A modest level of funding, in the order of \$2,500 (GST exclusive), may be required to support the officers report if technical information is required.

## 7) Priorities

- Not considered a priority item

### ***Officer comment:***

Comments noted.

## 8) Other

- Alternative venue for bands with youth focus
- Cater for younger audiences
- Heritage and partnership with Te Rūnanga o Arowhenua

### ***Officer comment:***

- 26 It is envisaged that the upgrade will encourage more shows to utilise the facility. The extent to which this caters for younger audiences is not known.
- 27 Enhancement of the Theatre Royal, along with the heritage facility in the area recognises the link to the Te Ana Maori Rock Art Centre in the historic Landing Services building.