

**Closure of Castleford Civic Centre**

The advantages of participating in the performing arts are well documented, with opportunities to develop confidence and self-esteem, teamwork and communication skills, cultural awareness, social connections, as well as the wide range of benefits to both physical and mental health.

Residents of Castleford and the surrounding area are spoilt for choice when it comes to organisations in this sector, with a number of different choirs, bands, theatre companies and dance groups available to join. For those not directly involved, regular performances bring enjoyment and help reinforce the sense of community for local residents.

News, therefore, that Castleford Civic Centre is due to close in October this year, is a significant blow for all the groups who make use of this venue. Although the number of bookings obviously reduced following the significant rise in the hire costs, it remains an important venue for large scale events. Moving further afield will bring transport and cost implications for the organisations, as well as their members and regular audiences, and may significantly impact the feasibility of hosting performances at all.

Hearing about the shelving of plans for a performance area as part of the redevelopment of the town centre, plus no prospect of the Phoenix Theatre at Airedale Academy reopening, the future of performing arts in the Five Towns is being placed in a very vulnerable position.

The building itself obviously requires investment and budgets are, as usual, very tight, but have all opportunities to attract the necessary investment been explored? Could a more creative look at the potential of the Civic Centre bring some new ideas as to how it might be utilised more?

No irony is lost on the fact that the Centre is to be closed during Experience Wakefield's 2024 cultural 'Our Year' initiative, but at any time, it will be a significant loss to our community.

Sincerely,

***Castleford Young Musicians***

***Castleford Male Voice Choir***

***Castleford Singers***

***Encore Theatre Company***

***Company A Theatre***

***Pauline Quirke Academy, Wakefield***