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PRESS RELEASE

HOUNSLOW ARTS TRUST TAKES DECISION TO CLOSE WATERMANS AHEAD OF ITS FUTURE MOVE TO NEW BUILDING.

Hounslow Arts Trust Ltd, the charity that operates Watermans, west London's leading arts centre, has announced the venue will close in mid-April as part of the transition period ahead of its planned move to a new building, providing a much-needed upgrade for the operation and enjoyment of the mixed programme.

The charity has taken the difficult decision to close Watermans as the best possible way of protecting both the interests of Hounslow residents and the organisation's financial viability ahead of its relocation to the site of the old police station building in Brentford.

In the context of a challenging recovery period following the pandemic, the impact of energy price rises and the on-going costs of maintenance for the current venue, it makes operational and financial sense to focus on the delivery of outdoor events at **Bell Square, Creative People and Places Hounslow** activities and other community-based programmes which do not require use of the current building. Each of these activities are fundamental to maintaining access to culture for Hounslow's residents and Hounslow Arts Trust will continue to work with its stakeholders to ensure that the CPP programme and outdoor events programme continues.

In 2023, Bell Square events reached a multi-generational and wholly diverse audience of 34,757 residents and visitors.

During 2023-24, Creative People and Places Hounslow programmes engaged with 135,000 residents.

All programmed events and activities at the Watermans building will stop. Hounslow Arts Trust Ltd. will continue to exist but with a focus on delivering a programme outside Watermans during the transition period and continue to work to enable this programme to continue.

Hounslow Arts Trust is extremely proud of the programmes that have been delivered with communities at Watermans for nearly forty years and would like to thank its incredible team of current and past staff at Watermans who made the venue such a welcoming community space for so many people, as well as the audiences, funders and artists who supported it over those years. The charity is grateful to its principal funders, Arts Council England and



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London Borough of Hounslow who have supported the organisation throughout the development of the transition plan.

Director of Watermans, Jan Lennox adds:

“Watermans has been home to the very best cinema, theatre, music, dance and performance for nearly forty years and it is heart-breaking that the venue is closing before the new building is ready. However, we are working hard to continue to deliver our exciting programmes outside of the current building and to continue to plan for when the new building is ready. A new building that will be more sustainable operationally and able to present an even stronger mix of high-quality dance, theatre, music, film and exhibitions.”

A Hounslow Council spokesperson said:

‘As a council we’re committed to supporting a rich cultural offer for the borough, recognising the many benefits arts and culture provide for our diverse communities. Watermans plays an important role in delivering our ambitions for culture and we’re pleased it will remain able to offer the community-based programmes residents really value. The cost-of-living crisis is putting enormous pressure on cultural venues across the country, and we support Hounslow Arts Trust taking the steps necessary to become sustainable.’

**For further information please contact Antony Pickthall, Marketing Director:
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About Watermans:

Waterman’s is West London’s arts centre. Our mission is to bring communities together through cultural practice and we exist to enrich lives through the arts and creativity. As an independent charity, Watermans believe the arts is for everyone and that is at the heart of everything it does. Watermans presents a programme of cinema, fringe theatre, exhibitions and workshops in a riverside location in Brentford. As an independent charity with an outreach programme across Hounslow, Watermans reaches tens of thousands of people who would otherwise enjoy little or no arts provision, and works with them to build community through the arts. Watermans houses an independent cinema, 250-seat theatre, contemporary art gallery and creative spaces.

Beyond the venue, Watermans is responsible for programming **Bell Square**, Watermans’ outdoor arts venue in Hounslow Town Centre, where it presents fortnightly free performances between May and November. Watermans also runs the major Arts Council-funded ***Creative People and Places (CPP Hounslow)*** programme that puts the decisions and views of local people at the heart of everything it does and aims to create a colourful, confident and creative Hounslow. CPP Hounslow is part of Arts Council England’s national investment in engaging new audiences in the arts, in areas where there is little or no access to arts and culture. Watermans leads the Creative People and Places consortium in Hounslow.

Watermans is a social enterprise and holder of the **Social Enterprise Mark**.



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