



Our Message to Watermans Customers

Today is a very sad day for Watermans. After nearly 40 years at the heart of our local community, we have no choice but to close our doors tonight for the final time.

I, and all the staff here, have cared deeply about Watermans, the communities we work with and everything we have done. I know there is so much sadness and frustration amongst our audiences that Watermans is closing - and we share that sadness and frustration. We have tried everything we could to avoid this moment.

As with all arts venues, there have been some challenging times over the last 40 years - but never like this. So many venues all over the country have closed over the last year or two and every week it seems another one goes. Nationally, audiences have still not consistently recovered to their pre-pandemic levels which, of course, affects our income.

The costs of running a building like Watermans have increased significantly and it is now clear that keeping the building open is unsustainable. As an example, our gas and electricity bills used to come to £49,000 a year. Last year, as energy price rises gathered momentum, we took a difficult decision to close the venue for two days each week and reduce opening hours to try and contain these costs. Despite being on an extremely competitive tariff - considerably below the Government's cap - our gas and electricity costs this year have now reached £125,000.

When I tell people this, they are truly shocked. But it is just one example of the soaring costs that have made it impossible for us to continue. We cannot continue to meet these costs and remain true to what Watermans is about - bringing high quality arts experiences to everyone, not just the people able to go to the West End.

Many people know that we are working closely with Hounslow Council to move to a brand new, purpose-designed building in the heart of Brentford town centre. It is probably one of the most exciting developments in Watermans' history. A new theatre designed to show the best of modern performance, a stunning new gallery, and a cinema offering state of the art film experiences. And most importantly of all, designed to encapsulate the warmth and welcome to everyone, whoever they are, which is the

true soul of Watermans. You tell us this constantly, we know how important it is and we won't forget.

On behalf of all the staff here, thank you for being part of the Watermans family over all these years. We have all loved welcoming each and every one of you to the venue and getting to know so many of you. Thank you, too, for all your care and support over these last few weeks. Every day, so many of you have called or popped in to see how we are. You've brought us cake, chocolates and so much love.

Whilst this next couple of years or so is going to be very different for us, Watermans will still be doing all the activities that we do out in the community. We'll still be doing Creative People and Places Hounslow, working all over the borough with local people to put on great cultural events in their local areas. From summer festivals in Hounslow High Street, outdoor film screenings on Beavers Estate to the wonderful Feltham Fete. From supporting Hounslow's Community Choir, the Community Brass Band in Feltham, Shakti Divas bhangra group in Heston to the Ukulele Collective in Brentford. From great new exhibitions in the borough's libraries to supporting many, many local artists and creatives to develop and show their work.

Our regular outdoor performances will continue at Bell Square in Hounslow town centre. It's the 10th anniversary of Bell Square this year and we'll be celebrating in style with world-class theatre, dance and contemporary circus, every other Saturday through the summer and autumn. All events are free and there's always a lovely atmosphere. Check out the Bell Square website or sign up for emails about what's on. I really hope we see you there and can keep in touch.

And, of course, I hope that we are able to open the new Watermans in Brentford town centre before too long. I'm looking forward to that very happy day for Brentford and Hounslow and for Watermans.

Thank you so much again. Please stay on the journey with us.

Jan and the Watermans Team