

Revitalising Aberdeen's Children's Theatre: A Case Study on Enhancing Accessibility and Inclusion with Castlegate Arts

This case study delves into Castlegate Arts' formidable challenge of rejuvenating the historic Children's Theatre in Aberdeen, a structure constrained by limited accessibility. Recognising the imperative need to create an inclusive space for disabled patrons, Castlegate Arts embarked on a journey to retrofit the theatre with a discreet ramp and a disabled toilet. Collaborating with David Chouman, an acclaimed local architect with a deep understanding of Aberdeen's listed buildings, Castlegate Arts leveraged £32,750 in funding provided by the Place Based Investment Programme to breathe new life into this beloved venue.

Nestled in the heart of Aberdeen, the Children's Theatre - an integral part of the iconic Arts Centre building - stands as a testament to the city's rich cultural heritage. Since its inauguration in 1942, it has been a nurturing ground for countless young Aberdonians, many of whom have left their mark on the theatrical and political stage. However, the passage of time has seen the usability of the theatre, especially at 31 King Street, suffer due to the lack of accessible facilities.

Recognising the pressing need for inclusivity, Castlegate Arts, committed to the theatre's preservation and revitalisation, undertook the mission of upgrading the venue. The absence of step-free access had previously rendered the building inaccessible to disabled audience members, thereby inhibiting its full utilisation as a performance venue or workshop/rehearsal space.

To counter this, Castlegate Arts collaborated with David Chouman to envisage a more accessible theatre. The initiative sought to install a discreet ramp and a disabled toilet - the latter already having secured planning permission. With the exterior ramp at 31 King Street awaiting planning permission, the project was ready to launch.

Buoyed by the Place Based Investment Programme, Castlegate Arts stood on the brink of bringing this transformation to fruition within the projected timescales, assuming no delays in planning and Listed Building consent for the ramp.

The successful installation of accessible facilities at the Aberdeen Arts Centre - Children's Theatre marked a significant milestone in the institution's history. The venue has now opened its doors wider to welcome and include patrons with disabilities, fostering a more inclusive and vibrant community hub. This transformative project represents a commendable step forward for the centre and serves as a beacon of progress for the community at large.

Before and after images

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