

GENERAL LICENSING COMMITTEE

7 JUNE 2022

APPLICATION FOR RENEWAL OF LICENCE FOR PREMISES TO BE APPROVED AS A VENUE FOR MARRIAGES AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

Hippodrome Theatre and Head of Steam, Darlington Railway Museum

Purpose of Report

1. To consider the renewal of licences for the Hippodrome Theatre and the Head of Steam, Darlington Railway Museum to be able to continue as approved venues for civil marriage and civil partnerships in accordance with the provisions of:
 - (a) The Marriage Act 1949 (as amended by the Marriage Act 1994);
 - (b) The Civil Partnership Act (2004);
 - (c) The Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005 and 2021; and
 - (d) The Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act (2013).

Summary

2. Since 1994 local authorities have been able to approve venues where civil marriage and civil partnerships can take place as alternative venue to a Register Office with most approved venues being hotels.
3. Both the Hippodrome Theatre and the Head of Steam, Darlington Railway Museum have been licensed venues for civil marriage and civil partnerships for a number of years now and has whilst not their primary business, both continue to be a popular choice as a wedding venue.
4. The Hippodrome Theatre and the Head of Steam, Darlington Railway Museum are both unique alternatives for a wedding at the register office or a hotel and attract couples who are marrying both locally and from further afield and with both venues playing an important role in the culture and heritage of Darlington.
5. The current licences for both the Hippodrome Theatre and the Head of Steam, Darlington Railway Museum are due to expire on 30th June 2022.
6. Both venues have indicated that they have future bookings for weddings and wish to continue as approved venues for civil marriage and civil partnerships.
7. There have been no issues with either venue which would adversely affect their application to renew its licence. Renewal of the licence would provide a venue with a licence for civil marriage and civil partnerships for a further three years from 30th June 2022.

Information

8. Both the Hippodrome Theatre and the Head of Steam, Darlington Railway Museum have the required fire risk assessments and there are no accessibility or DDA issues which would adversely affect either application.
9. Both premises are considered to be suitable for approval as a venue for marriage and civil partnerships, subject to the standard conditions and a limit on the number of people permitted to be present in the nominated rooms. Neither venue wishes to change the capacities or designated areas where civil marriages or civil partnership can take place.
10. The Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005 were amended in March 2022 to permit outdoor marriage and civil partnerships at a suitable location anywhere within the boundary of the licensed premise. This would facilitate outdoor ceremonies at the Head of Steam should they wish to offer them.
11. The current locations and capacities for civil marriage and civil partnerships at the Hippodrome and the Head of Steam, Darlington Railway Museum are:

The Hippodrome Theatre:

The Auditorium – 1,000 people

The Hullabaloo Auditorium – 100 people

Head of Steam, Darlington Railway Museum:

Platform – 100 people

Meeting room – 60 people

Café – 30 people

Financial Implications

12. Both the Hippodrome Theatre and the Head of Steam, Darlington Railway Museum have been invoiced for £1750.00 being the fee for all venues seeking a grant or renewal of a licence for civil marriage or civil partnerships.

Legal Implications

13. The current licences for both the Hippodrome Theatre and the Head of Steam, Darlington Railway Museum expire on 30th June 2022. The grant of a further licence for both venues is required to facilitate its current bookings for civil marriages and partnerships. The standard renewal licence is for three years from the date of expiry of the current licence. The licensing committee can issue a licence on a shorter timescale as a temporary measure should it wish and/or make specific conditions including where the ceremony can take place, how many can attend and improvements for accessibility.

Conclusion

14. Members are asked to renew the licences for both the Hippodrome Theatre and the Head of Steam, Darlington Railway Museum as approved premises for civil marriage and civil partnerships for a further three years from 30th June 2022.

Recommendations

15. It is recommended that:

- (a) The licence for the Hippodrome Theatre as an approved premise for civil marriage and civil partnerships be granted for a further three years from 30th June 2022 and that the places designated where civil marriage and civil partnerships can take place indoors at the premises and the maximum of numbers of persons who can attend those marriage and civil partnerships continue to be:

The Auditorium – 1,000 people
The Hullabaloo Auditorium – 100 people

- (b) The licence for Head of Steam, Darlington Railway Museum as an approved premise for civil marriage and civil partnerships be granted for a further three years from 30th June 2022 and that the places designated where civil marriage and civil partnerships can take place indoors at the premises and the maximum of numbers of persons who can attend those marriages and civil partnerships continue to be:

Platform – 100 people
Meeting room – 60 people
Café – 30 people

Reasons

16. To facilitate the continuation of the Hippodrome Theatre and the Head of Steam, Darlington Railway Museum as a premises approved for civil marriages and civil partnerships.

**Luke Swinhoe, Assistant Director, Law and Governance and
Proper Officer for Darlington Registration District**