Work starts on Theatre Royal's new £115million development project

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Scottish Opera, which has owned the theatre since 1974, has been leading the campaign to raise the necessary funding to carry out the work, which will cost £11.5million and will be complete in time for Glasgow's hosting of the Commonwealth Games in 2014. Today, Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) added its support to the project, awarding a grant of £850,000.

Unveiling the design by award-winning Glasgow-based architects Page\Park, General Director of Scottish Opera, Alex Reedijk, said: "Our vision is to open up the theatre to become a social hub – somewhere people can gather with friends for great coffee during the day, enjoy outstanding performances, learn about the performing arts, and discover the wonderful heritage of this beautiful theatre."

A dramatic new entrance on the corner of Cowcaddens Road and Hope Street will provide spacious foyers and accommodate new bars, box office, cloakrooms, toilet facilities and hospitality suites. The new building will enable lifts to be installed for the first time, significantly improving access to all levels of the theatre. The development will also provide a new Education Suite enabling wider delivery of the arts education work for which Scottish Opera has established a world-leading name, as well as work carried out by Ambassador Theatre Group Creative Learning. For those with a head for heights, a new roof garden will offer views across the city.

85% of the funds required for the project have already been raised. The Scottish Government has committed capital funding of £3.96million to the development alongside funding from Creative Scotland, Glasgow City Council, The Heritage Lottery Fund and an array of Scottish and UK trusts and foundations, as well as support from individual donors. A public fundraising campaign to raise the remaining funds will begin later this year.

Culture Secretary, Fiona Hyslop, said: "This is a major step forward in the redevelopment of the Theatre Royal in time for the Commonwealth Games in 2014. This project will create a world-class venue in which to showcase Scotland's globally-renowned culture and creativity as well as a lasting legacy for the city of Glasgow and the whole nation."

The Theatre Royal has been a key venue in Glasgow's rich cultural offering since it was built 145 years ago, and work was carried out in 1974 and 1997 to preserve and restore the magnificent category A listed auditorium. With support from Heritage Lottery Fund, a major project to research and share the theatre's heritage will run alongside the building work.

Colin McLean, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland, said: "The Theatre Royal has delighted, educated and entertained generations of theatre-goers, its fascinating history tightly interwoven with the social history and cultural traditions of Glasgow. We are delighted to add our support to a project which will not only put this national treasure on a world-class stage but along the way will inspire and involve people of all ages with memorable and rewarding experiences which will enrich their lives."

The redevelopment plans have taken into account the vital role the venue plays in the city's cultural calendar and have been planned to minimise the impact on the venue's regular schedule of performances. Whilst the construction programme will last approximately 18 months, the theatre will close only for a three month period in early 2014.

Notes to editors

- Theatre Royal Glasgow was built in 1867. The Category A listed auditorium, designed by Charles Phipps, is 116 years old and is the largest surviving example of his work
- From 1957-1974 the theatre was home to STV
- The theatre is owned by Scottish Opera and has been managed by Ambassador Theatre Group since 2006.
- Sir Robert McAlpine has been appointed to carry out pre-construction services.

Further information

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