

Hyde Park Picture House Leigh Harrison

Hyde Park Picture House in Leeds can now begin work on The Picture House Project - a vital redevelopment that will secure the future of the 104-year old cinema for decades to come.

First opened in 1914, the Grade II listed picture house is one of the UK's oldest cinemas. Opening shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, it gained popularity by screening patriotic dramas and newsreels to boost morale during the war.

The picture house survived the advent of 'talkies' in the 1920s and continues to screen the very best independent and award-winning films from around the world.

Today, the cinema still attracts devoted visitors, and counts some famous faces amongst its fans, including filmmaker Wash Westmoreland (*Still Alice, Colette*), Hollywood actor Chris Pine (*Star Trek, Wonder Woman*) and broadcaster and film critic Mark Kermode.

Preserving unique heritage

The cinema's nine gas lights, originally installed as 'modesty lighting' to deter any inappropriate behaviour in the back seats, continue to be lit every day. Thanks to the project, they will now undergo essential refurbishment work to ensure

they continue to flicker long into the future.

Thanks to money raised by the National Lottery, as well as significant match-funding support from Leeds City Council, the project will preserve, protect and celebrate the cinema's unique heritage, whilst making the building more accessible and sustainable.

The Picture House Project will see the cinema undergo essential conservation work to the façade and existing auditorium, alongside the creation of new facilities including a larger foyer space and a second screen located in the cinema's large basement. The project will also allow the cinema's rich history to be explored and celebrated, through archival screenings, heritage tours and educational workshops - helping to tell the story of film making and film watching in the region.

Autumn 2019

Confirmation of the full National Lottery grant comes after two years of development work and extensive consultation with audiences, which resulted in the project receiving full planning approval earlier this year. The decision by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to allow the project to proceed, means that building work is now due to begin in autumn 2019.

As well as support from HLF, the project has only been made possible thanks to significant backing from Leeds City Council and the Garfield Weston Foundation, alongside funding support from the British Film Institute, the Pilgrim Trust, the Gwyneth Forrester Trust and the Co-op Community Fund.

Commenting on the award, David Renwick, Head of HLF Yorkshire and the Humber, said: "Hyde Park Picture House is not just a place to see wonderful stories on the silver screen, but is itself at the heart of many fantastic stories for the people of Leeds, and even further afield. We're thrilled that money raised by the National Lottery is being used to ensure that it continues to be a mainstay of the city's rich, and still growing, cultural heritage. This is such a timely project given the recent news of Channel 4 moving to Leeds and to the momentum behind Leeds as a cultural centre."

Judith Blake, Leader of Leeds City Council Councillor, said: "The Picture House is a rare cultural gem in our city and Leeds City Council is delighted to play a vital part in securing its future.

"With work on The Picture House Project set to coincide with Channel 4's move to Leeds and the opening of Screen Yorkshire's new Film Office, it has never been a more exciting time for film and television in our city. Collectively this brings us another step closer to making Leeds a truly innovative city, one that uses culture to shine a light on what is possible."

Paul Scholey, Chair of the Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera House Board, added: "As custodians of three of Leeds' most historic cultural venues, we're very proud of the important role Hyde Park Picture House plays in making our city so special.

"It is always a challenge to preserve a historic building in ways which are both true to the story of the building, and of value to the community that enjoys it. But with the support of the many fantastic partners we've had on this project we feel more confident than ever that we have found that way forward, and as a result the future of this wonderful gas-lit cinema is secured at last."

Further information

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Visit the Picture House Project website.

Notes to Editors

The Hyde Park Picture House was established in 1914 and is one of the UK's oldest cinemas. Located just outside of Leeds City Centre, the Grade II listed building features an ornate balcony, gas lighting and a cosy, friendly atmosphere. It screens the very best independent, art house and classic films from around the world, as well as special live events with filmmakers, artists and academics.

The Picture House Project team consists of:

- Page\Park (Architects)
- Buro Happold Engineering (Engineers)
- Gardiner & Theobald (Cost Consultant) and Martin McConaghy at IDCAS (Access Consultant)
- Support during the development phase from Turner Townsend (Project Management)

Alongside the architectural ambitions the scheme has a large activity programme and development of a sustainable business model going forwards. DCA Consultants have supported the scheme on business and activity planning.

Funding

HLF Heritage Grants applications are assessed in two rounds. The Picture House Project was initially granted round one development funding of £122,000 by HLF in 2016 allowing it to progress with its plans. Detailed proposals were then considered by HLF at second round, where a final decision was granted for the full funding award of £2,320,100.

Alongside HLF and Leeds City Council, match-funding for the scheme has been secured through:

- British Film Institute
- Gwyneth Forrester Trust
- The Pilgrim Trust
- Co-op Local Community Fund
- Friends of Hyde Park Picture House

The project is continuing to welcome match-funding contributions and will be embarking on a crowd-funding campaign when the redevelopment work begins. Individuals or businesses who are interested in sponsorship opportunities are welcome to contact the cinema's General Manager Wendy Cook via email: wendy@hydeparkpicturehouse.co.uk.

The Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera House Ltd. is a Charitable Company (Charity Registration Number 500408) which operates the Hyde Park Picture House, Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera House and the City Varieties Music Hall.

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