Scotland’s cultural venues take centre stage thanks to Heritage Lottery investment

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Perth theatre is where Ewan McGregor and Donald Sutherland learned their craft. HLF also awarded first-round passes* amounting to over £3million for the restoration of the Kings Theatre in Glasgow, the Assembly Rooms in Edinburgh and Campbeltown’s Art Nouveau Picture House.

Perth Theatre opened in 1900, its hidden doorway leading to an elaborate 800-seater auditorium which, designed by William Aleander, astounded audiences of the time. In 1935 it became home to Scotland’s first repertory theatre company, one of the few that remains today with its own craft workshop, paint shop and wardrobe facility enabling them to produce their own work. Last season, around 60,000 people attended the theatre’s award-winning drama and cultural programme. However, the historic fabric of the building is now in urgent need of restoration and repair.

As part of a wider redevelopment of Perth Theatre, funding from HLF will help see the auditorium restored to its former glory. The upper circle, which has been out of commission since the 1960’s will be reinstated as will the orchestra pit. The theatre’s impressive archive and collection of artefacts, materials, pictures, literature, scripts and costumes dating as far back as the mid 19th century will also be conserved as part of the project and made publically accessible for the first time.

An extensive schools programme, aimed at both primary and secondary, will be run as part of the project giving children the opportunity to learn about the history of Scottish theatre while older members of the community will be involved in reminiscence groups focussing on its social history. On-site conservation skills training will also take place during the restoration process and opportunities will be made available to volunteer as guides.

Ewan McGregor, heralded the redevelopment of the Theatre: “To be a part of a collective, creative endeavour at the heart of a working theatre is an unforgettable experience. This exciting venture is an investment in our future – creating new space and facilities for young people, returning the historic Edwardian auditorium to its original splendour, creating a new, modern, small scale performance space for a wider range of arts activity, providing education, workshop and rehearsal space for schools and community groups - all adding up to more opportunities for more people to get involved and become part of a living, working theatre. That is why I am excited to be involved in this next stage of Perth Theatre’s development.”

Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland, commented: “Cultural venues have a hugely important part to play in the life of our urban and rural communities. They are held dear in our hearts as they are interwoven with the history and cultural traditions of our particular place and provide our towns with their own sense of identity. They have delighted, educated and entertained audiences throughout the years and continue to do so. They also inspire and involve people of all ages in memorable and rewarding experiences which enrich their lives. The Heritage Lottery Fund is delighted to be able to help support the future of these treasures.”

Jane Spiers, Chief Executive of Horsecross, added: “We are absolutely thrilled that the HLF has recognised the huge value of this project to Perth and committed their maximum award of £500,000 to Perth Theatre. This adds to the £6m

already committed by Perth & Kinross Council and The Gannochy Trust, taking us over half way towards our target. Perth Theatre has been at the heart of life in Perth for over 100 years and our ambitious plans to develop a venue that can continue to take centre stage in the community, both culturally and economically, for now and far into the future have taken a big step forward with this award."

The Kings Theatre, Glasgow

The Kings Theatre was delighted to receive the news that it has been awarded a first-round pass of £1,857,000 plus Development funding of £51,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a project called 'Long Live the Kings'. The project will restore the building's exterior and front of house areas back to their original 1904 layout and decoration, while celebrating its fascinating history through a wide-ranging intergenerational oral history project.

The Kings Theatre is prized as one of the most complete and best remaining examples of theatre architect, Frank Matcham's, work. For over a century it has remained in continuous use as a 'receiving house' for touring companies, the purpose for which it was originally built. Attracting an audience of around 400,000 each year, it presents a wide-range of productions, is a major venue for the Glasgow International Comedy Festival, upholds the family tradition of the Christmas pantomime and is home to many amateur companies.

The programme of restoration works to the historic fabric will reinstate lost features, remove detrimental alterations and restore original finishes.

The Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh

The Heritage Lottery Fund today also indicated its initial support for the restoration of the Assembly Rooms by awarding a first-round pass for a project grant of £471,700 and development funding of £30,000. The poor state of the building and its outdated services require critical attention in order to prevent closure to the public.

The original Assembly Rooms were constructed between 1783 and 1787 in a neoclassical design by the little known John Henderson and extended several times throughout the 19th century. Purpose-built to accommodate social gatherings and events, they have a long and fascinating history: the building was a recruiting office for the Great War; Sir Walter Scott revealed himself as the 'great unknown author' of the Waverley novels there; they have hosted speeches from the likes of Dickens, Thakeray and Gladstone; and since 1981 have been an central venue of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

The planned project will address the serious condition of the building, upgrade the facilities to meet modern venue standards and includes an imaginative learning and participation programme which will develop a social history record of the building recording oral histories and recollections from patrons.

Councillor Deidre Brock, Culture and Leisure Convenor for the City of Edinburgh Council, said: "This first round pass from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is extremely welcome news. HLF clearly recognise how tremendously important the Assembly Rooms are to Edinburgh's cultural, architectural and social heritage, as well as their real potential to become one of the city's premier events venues. We are currently awaiting consideration of the refurbishment plans by the Planning Committee - if the project is given the go-ahead, we're well placed to begin work early 2011."

Campbeltown Picture House

Opening in 1913, Campbeltown Picture House is one of the first purpose-built cinemas in Scotland and has become the oldest in continuous operation. Located at the waterfront overlooking the marina, its design is unique, Glasgow School

Art Nouveau with an unusual ‘atmospheric’ style interior. Its fixtures are of the highest quality reflecting the town’s then growing prosperity and include electrically-lit stained glass windows flanking the stage.

The cinema has been an important social and cultural hub within the community for almost a hundred years. Today the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded it a Development grant of £70,000 and a first-round pass for a grant of £700,000, 40% of the estimated project costs to restore and conserve the cinema and introduce modern elements to secure its future prosperity.

Planned to be complete by the building’s centenary in 2013, the visitor-experience will be enhanced with a new café bar, the introduction of digital and 3-D projection, an historical interpretative exhibition using the iconic MacGrory Photographic collection and a new small auditorium.

Notes to editors

*A first-round pass means the project meets our criteria for funding and we believe it has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.

Perth Theatre has made a significant contribution to the dramatic arts over the last 100 years and remains a fertile training ground for the theatre industry. Alec Guiness and Edward Woodward have performed there and more recently Ewan McGregor was a member of the Perth Youth Theatre. Numerous high profile individuals have supported the theatre over the years including Sybil Thorndyke, John Gielguid, Noel Coward and George Bernard Shaw. Perth Theatre hosted the first Scottish Theatre Festival in 1939 and in the 1940’s was one of the first companies to tour the Highlands.

Full quote from Ewan McGregor who is Patron of Perth Theatre redevelopment- “My earliest theatre going memories include trips to Perth Theatre to the pantomime, it was a really magical experience. I knew from the age of 9 that I wanted to act and at the earliest opportunity I joined Perth Youth Theatre. Since my time, the youth theatre has continued to flourish and is now a company of 155 young people.

“For me it was the start of a career, but for many others, participation in arts activities is an equally life changing way of broadening horizons, boosting confidence and self worth and encouraging creativity in all walks of life. To be a part of a collective, creative endeavour at the heart of a working theatre is an unforgettable experience.

“This exciting venture is an investment in our future – creating new space and facilities for young people, returning the historic Edwardian auditorium to its original splendour, creating a new, modern, small scale performance space for a wider range of arts activity, providing education, workshop and rehearsal space for schools and community groups - all adding up to more opportunities for more people to get involved and become part of a living, working theatre. That is why I am excited to be involved in this next stage of Perth Theatre’s development.”

One of Edinburgh’s finest public buildings, the Assembly Rooms continues to play a major part in the cultural and social life of this city, with a busy calendar of events, functions, concerts and fairs attracting thousands of people to the heart of Scotland's capital throughout the year. Under the Assembly Rooms refurbishment plans, elements of the historic Georgian building would be restored to their original use, with high end retail units occupying the rooms on either side of the main doors and the elegant supper room being transformed into a 'destination' restaurant. These alterations will

make possible substantial refurbishment of the Assembly Rooms venue as a whole including the main function rooms, the ballroom, drawing rooms, and the music hall, which are all in desperate need of modernisation and repairs. These essential works, which will bring the building up to 21st century standards whilst retaining its historic fabric and heritage value, will enable the council to meet the needs of all customers 52 weeks of the year.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has invested over £500million in projects in Scotland.

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