Restoration of Liverpool’s Royal Court set to go ahead

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This money means that the first phase of the £10.6m scheme to refurbish the building will begin on 1 February 2012.

The Royal Court has long been seen as the people’s theatre in Liverpool, producing shows that attract a local audience that had not been catered for at other venues. This investment in the building is a great boost for the average person on the street, as well as the city as a whole.

Gillian Miller, founder and Chief Executive of the Royal Court Liverpool Trust, said: “It’s a great honour to be able to head up the campaign to renovate one of the city’s best loved buildings. This grant and vote of confidence from such a nationally important body as the Heritage Lottery Fund means that we can begin to turn our plans for the building into reality. We now need to make sure that we get it right for all those who are served by the building. From the older members of our community who enjoy the Royal Variety Lunch Club to the young people who take part in our annual Access All Areas project and perform on the same stage as the Trust’s Patron, Dame Judi Dench, who made her acting debut at the Royal Court in 1957. It is a hugely significant day in the history of the Royal Court Theatre and we are all delighted with the news’.

The Trust has committed to using local firms wherever possible in the renovation scheme and the architect who has drawn up the plans was raised and educated in the city.

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: “We at HLF are delighted to be able to support the restoration of the Royal Court, which plays such an important role in the cultural life of Liverpool. It is really appropriate that we are investing people's money raised through the national lottery into this, the people's theatre. With our support it will be conserved and renovated so that people from across the city can enjoy the Royal Court experience for many generations to come, whilst providing new opportunities for visitors to learn about the heritage of this magnificent building and the work that has been staged there.”

Paul Monaghan, Director of Allford Hall Monaghan Morris, said: "This grant is fantastic news for the Royal Court Theatre and will allow us to complete the first phase of work. By next Summer we will see the beginnings of the complete reinvention of the theatre with striking contemporary cabaret seating, new lighting and the complete redecoration of the auditorium which will make the Royal Court one of the leading venues in the country. At last the building will be able to match the superb quality of its productions."

Her Honour Elizabeth Steel DL, Chairman of the Royal Court Trust, added: ‘The Royal Court Liverpool Trust is delighted with this news. We are determined to see the theatre renovated for the people of Liverpool and have received much support along the way for which we are extremely grateful. This news from the Heritage Lottery Fund will ensure that we can start work on improvements to the theatre as soon as February next year. Support from the public has been key to our success to date and we will continue to work hard to ensure that they have one of the best theatres in the country.’

Councillor Wendy Simon, Cabinet Member Culture, Liverpool City Council, said: “The Heritage Lottery Fund award to the Royal Court Theatre is very good news indeed for Liverpool. It will bring new money into the region and provide a

platform to build on to help attract other funding to the theatre and the city. The Trust's plans for the building are exciting and this is a momentous day for the Royal Court Theatre and the people of Liverpool. We will continue to work with the Trust in whatever way we can to help them achieve a fully renovated theatre."

Dame Judi Dench CH DBE, Patron of the Royal Court Trust, says: "The Royal Court is one of our best loved regional theatres and especially dear to me. I made my stage debut here as Ophelia in the 50s and it was a wonderful experience. I am delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund have decided to support plans for the first phase of the theatres regeneration and look forward to seeing the Royal Court start a new chapter in its rich history."

Sir Terry Leahy, added: "This is good news indeed for the Royal Court Theatre, for Liverpool and the North West Region. There is no doubt that the Heritage Lottery Fund support will help to unlock future funds to ensure that the theatre is completely renovated. The Royal Court Theatre has played an important role in Liverpool's cultural life for nearly 200 years. This important award will ensure that it will continue as a vital resource for its local communities and for the increasing numbers of visitors and tourists to the city."

Cherie Booth QC, Campaign Ambassador, said: "This is fantastic news. The Royal Court means such a lot to the people of Liverpool. When I went to a production last year, I was delighted to see it so full of people enjoying a fantastic evening wholly produced in Liverpool. This grant will make sure that the building now receives some of the care and attention it so deserves and ensure that generations to come can enjoy the wonderful Royal Court Theatre. Well done to everyone involved!"

The Royal Court Trust was formed in 2008 to look after the building. In November 2010, it was granted a long lease on the building of 30 years from Liverpool City Council. This means that the Trust can start to access public funds and other sources of support such as private trust funds and foundations.

A £1 ticket levy was introduced in March 2010 on all tickets to shows at the Royal Court. This has raised over £200,000 to date which has been used as match funding for the Trust's second round Heritage Lottery application. The scheme will be phased to ensure that the theatre does not close to audiences for any longer than a few months at a time.

The Royal Court Liverpool Trust is a registered charity with the aims of safeguarding the Royal Court Theatre as a performance venue and engaging local communities with the wonderful Art Deco building and its rich history.

Trustees are Jonathan Falkingham, co-founder and Chief Executive of Urban Splash, Martyn Best Senior Partner of Paver Smith and President of the Liverpool Society of Chartered Accountants and Mark Featherstone-Witty, Founding Principal and Chief Executive of LIPA under the Chairmanship of Her Honour Elizabeth Steel DL.

Kevin Fearon, Chief Executive, Royal Court Liverpool, concluded: "This is brilliant news for Liverpool. We have been working hard to produce work that has a real connection with the people of Liverpool and this investment means that the Trust can now start the work that will give our growing audience the theatre that they deserve. Once the work has been finished we hope that there will be no more queues at the toilets and much longer queues at the Box Office!"

Notes to editors

The Trust appointed award-winning architects Allford Hall Monaghan Morris following an open competition to renovate and restore the grade ll listed theatre. The architects have been working with the Trust to develop a £10.6million scheme that is planned to be phased to enable the theatre to operate as much as possible throughout improvement

work.

The Royal Court Theatre has undergone something of a renaissance in recent years finding new audiences for home-produced theatre. Audiences enjoy the relaxed cabaret-style seating with dinner and drinks pre-show. The scheme by AHMM will develop this unique style further and make the whole building much more comfortable for all customers.

Further information

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