

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has today given a £3.7million grant to transform the town's iconic Grade II* listed building – already one of the region's premier cultural and live entertainment venues.

The scheme will enable much wider access to visitors and provide them with a greater understanding of the history of the building, creating a unique heritage attraction.

It will see parts of the building, currently inaccessible to the public, being opened up, including the Victorian courtroom, cells and fire station which would be made into heritage attractions in their own right.

The plans also include the restoration of the carriage driveway with original glass roof which will become the main box office and circulation area, an external lighting scheme, the development of new café and bar facilities, and a new community space.

Furthermore, visitors' experience of the building for concerts and shows will be improved which will lead to shorter queues for bars and toilets and a generally improved interior.

Middlesbrough Council has been working with the HLF to develop the project and has been awarded £3.7m following a successful second round funding application.

The authority will also put £4m into the scheme which will get underway in January 2016 and will see the Town Hall closed for an anticipated 21 months.

It adds to the £500m of investments being seen across the town which has been highlighted recently as part of the Middlesbrough is Changing campaign.

Middlesbrough Council's Deputy Mayor Cllr Dave Budd said: "The Town Hall is the jewel in Middlesbrough's crown and this project will restore it to its full majestic glory. Once complete it will be a celebration of our 19th century history with a 21st century outlook."

Councillor Charlie Rooney, Middlesbrough Council's Executive Member for Regeneration, said: "We are absolutely delighted that the HLF have given approval to funding for this scheme. There are fascinating areas of the building which the public don't currently have access to so it will make a fascinating visit in its own right as well as allowing us to make it a premier cultural destination."

Ivor Crowther, Head of the HLF North East, said:"The Town Hall is a stunning reminder of the town's proud industrial heritage and continues to stand as an important local landmark for the community.

"Today's HLF investment means that work can get underway in earnest on these exciting plans to reaffirm the building's social and historic value, secure its long-term future and transform it into a flagship heritage asset for Middlesbrough."

During the Town Hall's closure it is proposed to utilise alternative venues in the town such as the Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (mima), Middlesbrough Theatre, Centre Square, Middlesbrough Sports Village, Teesside University and Middlesbrough College.

The project will involve:

- Bringing currently unused spaces of heritage significance back into use
- Improving/restoring spaces of heritage significance that are currently in use
- Developing new activities for engagement with, participation in and learning about heritage in both new and restored spaces
- Revealing the full heritage significance of Middlesbrough Town Hall as an iconic physical representation of the town/wider Teesside area's historical and industrial heritage
- Contributing to the sustainable future use and longer-term preservation of the town hall by improving its viability as a flagship cultural venue, as well as heritage asset

Further information

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