 

*with* **Burnley Empire Limited**

**PRESS RELEASE FROM: Burnley Empire Theatre Trust**

Embargoed until 12pm on Tuesday 9th April 2019

**Burnley Empire Strikes Back Once Again with National Lottery support.**

The project set to bring life back to the Burnley Empire has been awarded a grant from National Heritage Lottery Fund in the final round of a ‘Resilient Heritage’ grant scheme.

Thanks to National Lottery players, a £44K grant has been awarded to support the first steps of the long-term restoration project. The funding will be used to improve knowledge of the building structure and condition, look at viable future uses in light of town centre developments, establish a charitable organisation and undertake trustee training and development to equip community owners with the knowledge and expertise to manage and develop the project.

Whilst people won’t notice dramatic changes in the building itself, these are essential steps towards bringing the building back into good heart and once again allowing the public to enjoy this amazing space.

BETT have been supported in their work by Theatres Trust, Theatresearch, the National Trust and Burnley Council.

Burnley Empire is the last surviving Edwardian theatre in the whole of East Lancashire; a hidden gem currently closed off to the public. In December 2018 the friend’s group ‘Burnley Empire Theatre Trust’ (BETT) formed Burnley Empire Limited and took ownership of the Burnley Empire in order to save the building from auction and continue efforts towards restoration and reuse.

**Sophie Gibson, Burnley Empire Limited Director said:** “This is fantastic news for the building and the town. This support, thanks to National Lottery players will kick start the project towards restoration and help towards the journey to bring the Empire into 21st century use. As always, it’s not going to happen overnight, and a lot of hard work has to go on behind the scene before progress is visible. Thanks to the support and help from the National Trust the application was submitted at the beginning of the year and we have been counting down the weeks and days before receiving the good news. Being awarded this grant shows that we are making progress and that the heritage and future use of the Burnley Empire is something to be valued and worth fighting for.”

**Barry Kilby, Burnley Football Club Vice-Chair said:** “On behalf of myself, my son Stephen and the Club I am delighted to see movement towards saving the iconic infrastructure of the building. The restoration of Burnley Empire theatre would be extremely beneficial to the town and a fantastic asset to the local community. I can see a great synergy between the Empire and the Football Club.”

**Claire Appleby, Theatres Trust Architecture Adviser said:** “We are delighted that the group has secured this funding. Burnley Empire Ltd has done a great job so far but this additional support will lay the foundations to move the project forward successfully.”

For further information, please contact Sophie Gibson on 07845811830 or email at [saveme@burnleyempiretheatretrust.co.uk](mailto:saveme@burnleyempiretheatretrust.co.uk)

Follow @BurnleyEmpire #BurnleyEmpire #SavingTheEmpire

* end -

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

Grant awarded: ‘Resilient Heritage Fund’ by National Heritage Lottery Grant

Amount awarded £44K

The Burnley Empire was built for W. C. Horner of the Victoria Opera House in Burnley and designed by the architect G. B. Rawcliffe, who had previously designed the Victoria Opera House in Burnley. The Theatre opened on Monday the 29th of October 1894 with a variety show and could originally seat 1,935 people.  
In 1911 the respected Theatre Architect, Bertie Crewe reconstructed the auditorium with a new seating capacity of 2,100, and it is Crewe's auditorium that remains to this day despite several changes of use and recent serious neglect. In the same year Crewe also completed the Shaftesbury Theatre in London and later, the Palace Theatre in Manchester. Theatres Trust describe his redesign of the Burnley Empire: ‘The auditorium is elaborately detailed with robust and richly formed plasterwork in the Classical style. As reconstructed by Crewe in 1911, it has two slightly curved wide and deep balconies, terminating in superimposed stage boxes framed between massive Corinthian columns supporting a deep cornice’.

**IMAGES**

Courtesy of & photo credits to: *Ben Hamlen at North Films* (2019)



