

PRESS RELEASE

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ABINGDON'S ABBEY BUILDINGS TO BE RESTORED FOR THE COMMUNITY, THANKS TO HERITAGE FUND GRANT

Abingdon's Abbey Buildings Trust has received initial support* from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to preserve and enhance Abingdon's oldest and most important heritage community buildings.

Development funding of £256,000 has been awarded by the Heritage Fund, to enable the charitable trust to progress their plans to apply for a full National Lottery grant at a later date.

The buildings are owned and maintained by the charity, The Friends of Abingdon Abbey Buildings Trust. The planning work will start early in 2023 and will take two years. The Abbey Buildings are the last remains of the great medieval Abbey of Abingdon, once the 6th richest abbey in England but mainly demolished in the Reformation of 1538. The charity saved the buildings from demolition in 1944 and have developed them into an important community asset containing the town centre's only theatre, the Unicorn.

The Abbey Buildings are used by a wide range of community groups, as well as hosting heritage visitors. However, usage is limited by accessibility issues and inadequate services and heating, meaning the buildings can only be used during the warmer months of the year. Thanks to National Lottery players, the project aims to make the buildings fully accessible, weather-tight and with adequate modern services to allow for all-year use.

Commenting on the award, Bryan Brown, Chairman of the Trust said: "We are delighted to have received this support thanks to National Lottery players. The buildings, including the Unicorn Theatre, are a vital community asset and it is great to know that we are a step closer to making them accessible for all, for generations to come."

Stuart McLeod, Director England - London & South at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "At the Heritage Fund, we know how important heritage is to bring communities together. Thanks to National Lottery players, we have given our initial support to the Friends of Abingdon Abbey Buildings Trust and look forward to working with them ahead of their full grant application."

ENDS

Notes to editors:

About The Friends of Abingdon Abbey Buildings Trust:

The Trust is a charity which owns and maintains Abingdon's oldest and most important heritage buildings. Once scheduled for demolition they are now a nationally scheduled monument and architecturally grade 1

listed, the highest status heritage buildings. For almost 80 years, these Buildings have developed into a vital community asset used by a range of community groups and play host to many community festivals and fairs. More information is available from: Bryan Brown, Chairman, email: chair@abingdonabbeybuildings.co.uk, phone: 07768 811195 or Andy McLeod, Secretary, email: secretary@abingdonabbeybuildings.co.uk, 07950 048745. www.abingdonabbeybuildings.co.uk.

About The National Lottery Heritage Fund:

*National Lottery Heritage Fund grant applications over £250,000 are accessed in two rounds. The Abingdon Abbey Buildings project has initially been granted round one development funding of £256,000 by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, allowing it to progress with its plans. Detailed proposals are then considered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund at second round, where a final decision is made on the full funding award of £2,500,000.

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we inspire, lead and resource the UK's heritage to create positive and lasting change for people and communities, now and in the future. www.heritagefund.org.uk.

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Since The National Lottery began in 1994, National Lottery players have raised over £43 billion for projects and more than 635,000 grants have been awarded across the UK. More than £30 million raised each week goes to good causes across the UK.