

Culture Recovery Fund will bring Blackpool Tower Ballroom back to former glory

- The home of British ballroom dancing will receive £764,000 from the Government's unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund
- Funding will restore period plasterwork to bring the Blackpool Tower Ballroom back to its former glory
- Major grant announced as Strictly Come Dancing celebrates iconic venue with studio special

The Blackpool Tower Ballroom is the latest venue to receive a lifeline grant of £764,000 from the Government's £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund, the Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden has announced.

The ballroom, located in the Grade I listed Tower Buildings, first opened to the public in 1894 and has a rich history as the home of British ballroom dancing. Millions of viewers will know the spectacular 19th century venue as the site of Strictly Come Dancing's annual ballroom special which airs this evening.

Blackpool's funding builds on more than £115 million which has been awarded to heritage sites across the country from the Culture Recovery Fund, including more than £39 million in grants dedicated to kickstarting construction and maintenance projects that have been paused due to the pandemic.

The £764,000 grant, awarded to Blackpool Council by Historic England on behalf of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, will enable the legendary venue to carry out comprehensive repair and restoration work on the ballroom's period plasterwork ceiling. The work will be undertaken during the building's current period of closure and will provide work to local specialists.

Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden, said:

The Blackpool Tower Ballroom has been an iconic home for British dance for more than a century. The Culture Recovery Fund will help restore this beautiful ballroom so that it can be enjoyed for generations to come.

Shirley Ballas, Head Judge – Strictly Come Dancing, 3 x Blackpool British Open Professional Latin American Champion

Blackpool holds a special place in the heart of every ballroom

dancer all over the world. It is a town steeped in Ballroom dance history and somewhere everyone hopes to dance one day. For me, I won my 3 British Professional Latin Championships in Blackpool, titles that I cherish. I am overjoyed to learn of the Government's investment to aid in the restoration of one of Blackpool's historic ballrooms, all of which house the memories and history of the ballroom dance industry. Thank you Oliver Dowden MP, I still owe you that cha cha cha lesson!

Anton du Beke, Judge – Strictly Come Dancing

How wonderful to hear the news about the investment in the Tower Ballroom in Blackpool. Such important funding to keep the art of ballroom dancing alive for generations to come! Keep Dancing!

Duncan Wilson, Historic England Chief Executive said:

Blackpool Tower Ballroom has played a hugely significant role in the history and popular culture of our country for over 125 years, as a landmark in British seaside architecture and tourism, to the special place it holds in the nation's heart as the iconic venue for TV's Strictly Come Dancing.

In these challenging times, our shared heritage is more important than ever. This vital funding will allow essential repairs to take place, providing employment for skilled craft workers and ensuring that we preserve this much-loved ballroom for everyone to enjoy, both now and in the future.

Historic sites, arts organisations and cultural venues in all four nations are benefiting from the UK Government's biggest ever one-off investment in culture, with £188 million barnetted to the Devolved Administrations – £97 million for Scotland, £59 million for Wales and £33 million for Northern Ireland. This is in addition to £500 million awarded across England already. This funding is enabling them to increase the support already available to the arts and cultural sectors in each nation.

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Additional quotes:

Sammy Stopford MBE, 5 x Blackpool British Open Professional Latin American Champion, Blackpool Dance Festival Hall of Fame, President World Dance Council Amateur League said:

Blackpool has been home to prestigious Ballroom dance festivals for almost 100 years and is considered by all to be the home of

Ballroom dancing. As such, I believe the generous economic contribution towards the restoration of Blackpool's historic ballrooms is a sign of this Government's intent to preserve an art form deeply ingrained within the identity of this country. Thank you, Oliver Dowden CBE MP and the Department for DCMS; we are truly grateful for your actions!

Richard Gleave OBE CBE, 8 x Blackpool British Open Professional Ballroom Champion.

One of the Jewels in the Crown of Blackpool, the legendary Tower Ballroom is one of the most magnificent and famous Ballrooms in the World

Bryan Allen, Former President – British Dance Council

For International ballroom dance relations and overseas visiting ballroom dancers, this is fantastic news!

Marcus Hilton MBE & Karen Hilton MBE

Having won multiple British and World titles in this most iconic, world famous dancing town of Blackpool, Karen and I are absolutely thrilled that this magical arena has been awarded over £750k from DCMS as part of their Cultural Recovery Plan.

Mark Lunn, President – Dance Promoters Association

Wonderful news! The importance of ballroom dance to the town of Blackpool is difficult to quantify. Add to that the historic value of the Tower Ballroom itself. This is a great gesture from the UK Government

Councillor Gillian Campbell, Cabinet Member for Tourism & Culture, Blackpool Council, said:

We are thrilled to be awarded this grant which will help bring the ornate ceiling of the magnificent Tower Ballroom back to its former glory. The ballroom has provided entertainment for generations of people for more than a century and is a national treasure, not least because of its relationship with Strictly.

We are enormously appreciative that its importance to the cultural heritage of this country has been recognised in this way.

Kate Shane, Head of Cluster, Merlin Entertainments, operators of The Blackpool Tower on behalf of Blackpool Council, said:

I am remarkably fortunate to be able to appreciate the splendour of the Tower Ballroom every working day. I see at first hand the sheer joy that it brings to people whether they are ballroom dancing, enjoying afternoon tea or simply taking in the extraordinary surroundings.

The timing of the grant could not be better as the ballroom is currently closed because of pandemic restrictions and we cannot wait to see the work on the restoration of this beautiful plasterwork ceiling to commence.