

Didcot Railway Centre to receive £114,015 from second round of the Government's Culture Recovery Fund

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Didcot Railway Centre has received a grant of £114,015 from the Government's £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund to help the organisation recover and reopen. The largely open air living museum is operated by a registered charity, the Great Western Society, which celebrates its 60th Anniversary this year.

More than £300 million has been awarded to thousands of cultural organisations across the country including Didcot Railway Centre in the latest round of support from the Culture Recovery Fund, the Culture Secretary announced.

The Railway Centre is set to reopen at weekends and Wednesdays from 14 April allowing visitors to explore almost two centuries of railway heritage set across 21 acres. Steam trains will be running on the Centre's demonstration line offering unlimited rides aboard a train of beautifully restored vintage carriages with each group allocated an individual compartment for their trip – further details can be found, and tickets booked, at www.DidcotRailwayCentre.org.uk.

Over £800 million in grants and loans has already been awarded to support almost 3,800 cinemas, performance venues, museums, heritage sites and other cultural organisations dealing with the immediate challenges of the coronavirus pandemic.

The second round of awards made today will help organisations to look ahead to the spring and summer and plan for reopening and recovery. After months of closures and cancellations to contain the virus and save lives, this funding will be a much-needed helping hand for organisations transitioning back to normal in the months ahead.

Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden, said: “Our record breaking Culture Recovery Fund has already helped thousands of culture and heritage organisations across the country survive the biggest crisis they’ve ever faced.

“Now we’re staying by their side as they prepare to welcome the public back through their doors – helping our cultural gems plan for reopening and thrive in the better times ahead.”

Clive Hetherington, Chief Executive, Didcot Railway Centre commented: “Having been required to close for nine of the last 14 month this is a real lifeline and we should like to thank the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport and Arts Council England for this support.

“Our team are looking forward to being able to welcome visitors once again and have a robust plan to keep everyone safe based on our experience of operating successfully and the fabulous visitor feedback we received last summer.”

Sir Nicholas Serota, Chair, Arts Council England, said: “Investing in a thriving cultural sector at the heart of communities is a vital part of helping the whole country to recover from the pandemic. These grants will help to re-open theatres, concert halls, and museums and will give artists and companies the opportunity to begin making new work.

“We are grateful to the Government for this support and for recognising the paramount importance of culture to our sense of belonging and identity as individuals and as a society.”

The funding awarded today is from a £400 million pot which was held back last year to ensure the Culture Recovery Fund could continue to help organisations in need as the public health picture changed. The funding has been awarded by Arts Council England, as well as Historic England and National Lottery Heritage Fund and the British Film Institute.

Photo credit: Didcot Railway Centre