

**Press release:**

Wednesday 15 January 2020

## **Historic cinema takes to the road with major redevelopment set to begin**



With the Hyde Park Picture House set to close its doors and begin work on a major development from the end of February, it was announced last night that the cinema will continue screening films throughout 2020, with the launch of its *On the Road* film programme.

Starting mid-February the cinema will begin screening an exciting mix of new independent films, documentaries, cult-classics and family favourites – working in partnership with venues across the city including Leeds University Union, Heart in Headingley, The Brunswick and the Brudenell Social Club.

This follows the announcement last year that the UK's last remaining gas-lit cinema has secured a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £2.3million to deliver *The Picture House Project*, that will see the Grade II listed building undergo essential repair and restoration work, alongside the creation of new accessible facilities including a brand new second screen.

At an event held at the Picture House on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March, Head of Cinema Wendy Cook and Page Park architect Mark Johnston delivered a project update to partners and stakeholders, detailing the ways in which the cinema's unique heritage features will be repaired including the cinema's nine gas-lights.

### **Wendy Cook, Head of Cinema said:**

*"The Picture Houses' story has been over 100 years in the making, shaped by hundreds of thousands of film lovers. Having the opportunity to safeguard the cinema for another 100 years is both a privilege and a pleasure. "*

It was also announced that Francis Lee, the BAFTA-nominated writer and director of the acclaimed 2017 hit *God's Own Country*, is set to become the Picture House's first ever patron. Yorkshire-born and an avid supporter of the cinema, Lee is currently working on his new film *Ammonite* starring Kate Winslet and Saoirse Ronan, due for release later this year.

### **Filmmaker & Hyde Park Picture House Patron Francis Lee said:**

*"I am delighted to be the patron of Hyde Park Picture House. It is a huge honour. The Picture House team have been very supportive of me from the beginning of my career as a film maker. Our association beginning in 2012 when they screened my very first short film.*

*Hyde Park Picture House is a vital part of the cultural identity of not just Leeds, but the surrounding area, offering an incredible mix of cinema, community involvement and support to local film makers. I am very excited to see how the Picture House continues to evolve and grow following the development plans have been executed."*

Local sponsors Kirkstall Brewery also announced plans to brew an exclusive beer with the cinema this spring, as part of the cinema's community fundraising campaign, with 20% off all

sales going towards the project.

*The Picture House Project* will see the cinema undergo essential conservation work to the façade and existing auditorium, alongside the creation of new facilities, including a larger foyer space and a second screen located in the cinema's large basement. The project will also allow the cinema's rich history to be explored and celebrated through archival screenings, heritage tours and educational workshops - helping to tell the story of film making and film watching in the region.

As well as support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the project has only been made possible thanks to significant backing from Leeds City Council and the Garfield Weston Foundation; alongside funding support from Film Hub North, Leeds Inspired the Pilgrim Trust, the Gwyneth Forrester Trust and the Co-op Community Fund.

**The Leader of Leeds City Council Councillor Judith Blake said:**

*"The Picture House is a rare cultural gem in our city and Leeds City Council is delighted to play a vital part in securing its future.*

*With work on The Picture House Project set to coincide with Channel 4's move to Leeds and the opening of Screen Yorkshire's new Film Office, it has never been a more exciting time for film and television in our city. Collectively this brings us another step closer to making Leeds a truly innovative city, one that uses culture to shine a light on what is possible."*

**Paul Scholey, Chairperson of the Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera House Board, added:**

*"As custodians of three of Leeds' most historic cultural venues, we're very proud of the important role Hyde Park Picture House plays in making our city so special.*

*Finding a way to preserve historic buildings, which is both true to the story of the building, and of value to the community who enjoy it, is a challenge. But with the support of the many fantastic partners we've had on this project we feel more confident than ever that we have found that way forward, and as a result the future of this wonderful gas-lit cinema is secured at last."*

The cinema remains open as normal through until the end of February, with a busy upcoming schedule of the latest new independent releases, including *Jojo Rabbit*, *1917*, *Waves*, *The Lighthouse* and *Parasite*.

**-Ends-**

**Notes to Editors**

The Hyde Park Picture House first opened in 1914, the Grade II listed Picture House is one of the UK's oldest cinemas. Beginning its life shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, it gained popularity by screening patriotic dramas and newsreels to boost morale during the action. The Picture House survived the advent of 'talkies' in the 1920s and continues to screen the very best independent, art house and classic films from around the world, as well as special live events with filmmakers, artists and academics.

Today, the cinema still attracts devoted visitors, and counts some famous faces amongst its fans, including filmmaker Wash Westmoreland (*Still Alice*, *Colette*), Hollywood actor Chris Pine (*Star Trek*, *Wonder Woman*), and broadcaster and film critic Mark Kermode.  
[www.hydeparkpicturehouse.co.uk](http://www.hydeparkpicturehouse.co.uk)

The Picture House Project team consists of Page\Park (Architects), Buro Happold Engineering (Engineers), Gardiner & Theobald (Cost Consultant) and Avison Young (Project Management)

Alongside the architectural ambitions the scheme has a large activity programme and development of a sustainable business model going forwards. DCA Consultants have

supported the scheme on business and activity planning. Full details on the Picture House project can be found at [www.thepicturehouseproject.com](http://www.thepicturehouseproject.com)

On the Road is a 12-month long programme of pop-up screening across the city, set-to begin from mid-February onwards whilst the cinema is closed. The programme is comprised of six unique strands, each linked with a specific venue in the city:

New Indies - at Leeds University Union ([www.luu.org.uk](http://www.luu.org.uk))

Hyde & Seek - at Heart (& other venues) ([www.heartcentre.org.uk](http://www.heartcentre.org.uk))

Creatures of the Night - at The Brunswick ([www.thebrunswick.co.uk](http://www.thebrunswick.co.uk))

Docs & Artists' Moving Image – at 42 New Briggate

Memory Matinees – at Heart ([www.heartcentre.org.uk](http://www.heartcentre.org.uk))

The full programme of screenings and events will be available to view from the cinema's website in the coming days: [www.hydeparkpicturehouse.co.uk](http://www.hydeparkpicturehouse.co.uk)

About the National Lottery Heritage Fund Thanks to National Lottery players the Heritage Fund invests money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under foot to the historic parks and buildings that help articulate our history, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife.  
[www.heritagefund.org.uk](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk)

Alongside major support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Leeds City Council, match funding for the scheme has been secured through Garfield Weston ([www.garfieldweston.org](http://www.garfieldweston.org)) Film Hub North ([www.filmhubnorth.org.uk](http://www.filmhubnorth.org.uk)), The Gwyneth Forrester Trust ([www.forrestertrusts.com](http://www.forrestertrusts.com)), the Co-op Local Community Fund ([www.causes.coop.co.uk](http://www.causes.coop.co.uk)), Leeds Inspired ([www.leedsinspired.co.uk](http://www.leedsinspired.co.uk)) and The Friends of Hyde Park Picture House ([www.friendsofhpph.org.uk](http://www.friendsofhpph.org.uk)).

The project is continuing to welcome match-funding contributions and will be embarking on a crowd-funding campaign when the redevelopment work begins. Individuals or businesses who are interested in sponsorship opportunities are welcome to contact Head of Cinema, Wendy Cook, on [wendy@hydeparkpicturehouse.co.uk](mailto:wendy@hydeparkpicturehouse.co.uk).

The Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera House Ltd. is a Charitable Company (Charity Registration Number 500408) which operates the Hyde Park Picture House, Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera House and the City Varieties Music Hall.

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