

£490,000 Heritage Grant Set to Transform Bedford's Historic Town Centre

Bedford's historic character is poised for a significant revival following the announcement of a £490,000 grant from Historic England. The funding will be directed towards restoring shopfronts along Tavistock Street and Broadway, as part of an ongoing initiative to revitalise the town's architectural heritage and commercial vibrancy.

This new phase of improvements falls under the High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) Programme, a project launched by Bedford Borough Council in 2020 with the aim of enhancing the town's historical assets while supporting local economic regeneration. To date, the programme has attracted a total investment of £6.5 million, which has been used to restore six historic shopfronts, repave Silver Street, and widen pavements along High Street to improve accessibility and public safety.

The latest allocation of funds is specifically targeted at enhancing the visual appeal and commercial viability of Tavistock Street and Broadway, two key areas that hold significant historical value but have seen limited recent investment.

Mohammad Yasin, Member of Parliament for Bedford, welcomed the funding as a positive step in the town's ongoing renewal. "This is a real vote of confidence in our town's rich heritage. The £490,000 grant from Historic England will allow us to build on the regeneration work already completed and extend its impact across other important parts of the town centre," he said.

The restoration works will focus on improving shopfront facades, reinstating historic features, and creating a more cohesive streetscape that respects Bedford's traditional character. These changes are expected not only to enhance the town's appearance but also to boost footfall and attract new businesses.

Tony Calladine, East of England Regional Director for Historic England, described the initiative as "a remarkable success", adding: "This new phase focusing on Tavistock Street and Broadway aims to extend the benefits already delivered in the town centre, helping to preserve Bedford's historic identity while creating a more attractive and economically resilient environment."

This investment comes at a time when many town centres across the UK are facing significant economic pressures. By integrating heritage-led regeneration with urban planning and economic strategy, Bedford is positioning itself as a leading example of how historic towns can successfully adapt to modern needs without compromising their cultural identity.

As the project enters this new stage, Bedford's commitment to preserving its past while

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planning for its future remains clear. Through strategic investment and collaborative leadership, the town centre is on track to become a thriving and visually enriched destination for residents, visitors, and businesses alike.