

**THEATRE: *Winter Gardens Complex: Blackpool Opera House and Pavilion Theatre***

**Listed:** Grade II\*

**Address:** Church Street, Blackpool FY1 1HL

**Local Authority:**

Blackpool City Council

Planning and Transportation

PO Box 17

Corporation Street

Blackpool FY1 1LZ

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[www.blackpool.gov.uk](http://www.blackpool.gov.uk)

**Current Freehold Owner:** Leisure Parcs

**Current Leasehold Owner:** Leisure Parcs

**Current Operator/Manager:** None

**Local Contact:** Carl Carrington, Built Heritage Manager Tel: 01253 476332

Email: [carl.carrington@blackpool.gov.uk](mailto:carl.carrington@blackpool.gov.uk)

**The Theatres Trust Contact:** Suzanne McDougall. Tel 020 7836 8591

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**Original theatre architect(s):** 1875: Thomas Mitchell, Winter Gardens and Pavilion Theatre; 1897: Mangnall & Littlewood, Empress Ballroom, Palm House and Indian Lounge; 1929-31: J O Derham, alteration to façades, Galleon Bar, Spanish Hall and Baronial Hall; 1939: C H MacKeith, Opera House.

**Building Description**

The Winter Gardens is a vast entertainments complex containing a number of individual entertainment venues and components. The Winter Gardens, together with the Tower established Blackpool as the premier seaside resort.

**Theatre Use**

The complex has three main theatrical components: the 3000 seat *Opera House* which can host major large touring shows, the 1500 seat *Pavilion Theatre* and the 3000 standing capacity *Empress Ballroom* which has a stage and is capable of hosting small performances. The complex also has several other public spaces including the Olympia Hall and the Spanish Hall which all have the possibility of hosting theatrical performance.

**Occupancy:** Theatre, conference and cabaret use.

**Building Location**

The Winter Gardens is located in a central position within Blackpool town centre.

**Risks**

The *Winter Gardens* has had economic viability problems for a number of years. Blackpool City Council has been underwriting losses at the complex since 1983 in order to keep the building open. The main political parties no longer use the *Winter Gardens* for conferences and there has been a decline in the use of the building for activities generally. The loss of the regional casino planned for Blackpool has also contributed along with the downward trend of visitors since 1983. There has been a lack of investment into the listed structure of the building. Leisure Parcs has a significant dilemma regarding the viability of the complex and Blackpool may lose this nationally important and impressive Victorian and Twentieth Century complex. A Conservation Statement has been commissioned by the owners to assist in possible future discussions.