All Our Stories: RNIB Cymru one of 31 projects across Wales to delve into the past

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A significant project exploring the experiences of blind and partially sighted people in Wales, from the mid-1800s to the present day, has been given the go-ahead, thanks to funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund's All Our Stories small grant programme.

This grant programme – developed alongside BBC Two's history series, The Great British Story – A People's History, aims to get thousands of people involved in exploring their local history, customs and traditions.

Launched in April, All Our Stories was so popular that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) quadrupled the amount originally set aside for projects. Grants from £3,000 up to £10,000 have been awarded to organisations ranging from small community groups, residents' associations and local history groups to larger heritage organisations and charities. The grants will bring communities together to explore the past, providing people with the necessary skills and expert advice – delivered by top academics - to delve into their local history in a lasting and well-informed way.

RNIB Cymru has been awarded a £10,000 grant to run the Insight into the Past project, which is one of 31 projects across Wales to receive funding from the All Our Stories programme.

The year-long project will record people's experiences and document the development of services, while also charting society's changing attitudes towards blind and partially-sighted people.

Workshops will be held across Wales and a DVD and booklet – including audio, large print and Braille formats - will be produced and distributed to blind and partially sighted people throughout the UK.

Once complete, the project's findings will be presented to the National Museum of Wales and the capital's Cardiff Story museum. A grand opening and reception celebrating Insight into the Past will also be held next summer at RNIB Cymru and the Cardiff Institute for the Blind's new centre of excellence, based at Jones Court, Womanby Street, Cardiff.

Ceri Jackson, Director of RNIB Cymru, said: "We're delighted to have received this funding from the HLF, and are very excited to start working on this project. Services for people with sight loss, and attitudes to blind and partially sighted people, have transformed in a generation. We spend a lot of our time campaigning for further change and greater improvements and, whilst we will continue to do so, it is also important to look back and reflect on how far we have come.

"Many of the blind and partially sighted people we work with tell stories about their experiences that really demonstrate how society has changed; we want to capture those stories, to share them with the widest possible audience and preserve them for the future. We believe it is an important piece of social history, and the grant we have received from the HLF will allow us to do just that."

Jennifer Stewart, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Wales, said: "I have been amazed by the interest in All Our Stories - clearly the success of this new programme has reinforced the fact that we are indeed a nation of storytellers and that we want to explore our past and discover more about what really matters to us. This is exactly what the grant will do for the

Insight into the Past project as the RNIB Cymru team embarks on a real journey of discovery.

“I am really pleased that we have been able to find the money to support so many fascinating projects.”

Michael Wood, TV presenter and historian who presented The Great British Story, added: “We British love our history, and no wonder: few nations in the world, if any, have such riches on their doorstep, and so much of it accessible to all of us. It is fantastic that so many people have been inspired to get involved, both from The Great British Story series, and HLF’s All Our Stories. Thanks to lottery players, people can now dig deeper into their own past and I’m certain many surprising stories will be uncovered which will not only bring to life the excitement of local history, but will illuminate every community’s connection with the national narrative.”

To support All Our Stories, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) is providing funding so that projects can work closely with universities and benefit from the professional support of heritage experts. The AHRC funding will be encouraging early career researchers to work with community groups to share and develop their research skills. HLF will also be commissioning The Media Trust to help projects create a new type of digital record of the work they do.

Although the All Our Stories programme is now closed to further applications, HLF will be launching a new £3,000 - £10,000 community heritage grants programme called Sharing Heritage in February 2013. It will use a similar, simple-to-access application process and will also be designed to reach new applicants working at grass roots.

HLF has supported more than 2,000 projects across Wales, awarding more than £240million in grants over the 18 years of National Lottery funding. These projects range from St Fagans: National History Museum, the acquisition of the medieval manuscript of the Laws of Hywel Dda and the Heather and Hillforts Landscape Partnership, in Denbighshire.

Other successful All Our Stories grant winners in Wales include:

Settling in Wales - Chinese immigrants to Swansea share their stories
The experiences of first-generation Chinese immigrants to Swansea are to be researched by the Swansea Chinese Community Co-op Centre, which has been awarded a grant of £9,900. With the support of the Glamorgan Archive Service and Swansea University, participants will hold workshops and record interviews, producing a multi-lingual DVD which will be launched at a community event and shared through a range of social media. Copies of the DVD will also be placed with the West Glamorgan Archive Service and Swansea University's library and distributed to local schools.

Pathways to the past
Fifteen young people from the Caerau and Ely areas of Cardiff will create a heritage trail across Caerau Iron Age hillfort, in a project run by community enterprise Action in Caerau and Ely (ACE), who were awarded a grant of £9,600. By linking the heritage trail to nearby housing estates, the aim is to reconnect local people to the hillfort, which is vulnerable to anti-social behaviour. The young people will visit a reconstructed settlement in Castell Henllys, Pembrokeshire, to learn about Iron Age life, while experts from Cadw, the National Museum of Wales and Cardiff University will support the project. An Iron Age-themed mural will be painted on the wall of an underpass leading to the site, and basic sign posting and interpretation will be produced. A one-day Iron Age festival, at which young people will cook authentic Iron Age recipes, will launch the project. Participants will record their work through a variety of digital media for publication on the ACE website.

Treuddyn Urdd Project
Ninety years ago, the first Urdd ‘aelwyd’ or youth club was established in the small rural village of Treuddyn, in Flintshire, north east Wales. A special project run jointly by Treuddyn Community Council and the Urdd, supported by a

£9,000 grant, will see residents of all ages share memories of the Urdd on its 90th anniversary. Particular attention will be paid to how a child's life in the village has changed over time.

Conwy Digital History World War II Project
A grant of £5,800 will enable Tape Community Music and Film to research, restore and archive existing sound recordings and films of Conwy residents' memories of the Second World War. Interviewing Second World War veterans in Llandudno is another aspect of this new digital project. Participants will also visit attractions such as the Llandudno Home Front Experience and the Great Orme Coastal Artillery School in order to interview experts. An online collection of material will be produced, while there are also future plans to develop a SmartPhone app.

Notes to editors

- All Our Stories featured in five BBC Learning events at flagship heritage locations which ran in tandem with The Great British Story – A People's History TV series to get people involved with their local heritage. These events provided opportunities for people to discover their place in history, learn about their surnames and uncover the history of their local area.
- The funding has been made available through the AHRC's Connected Communities programme whose aim is to understand through research the changing nature of communities and the role of communities in sustaining and enhancing our quality of life.
- The Media Trust believes in the power of media to change lives. It works with the media industry to empower charities and communities to have a voice and be heard. This is achieved by providing communications skills and resources, helping access audiences, and harnessing creative industry talent. For more information visit the Media Trust website or follow on Twitter @Media_Trust

Further information

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