Balsall Heath launches diamond jubilee

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The Balsall Heath Local History Society will be getting local people to come up with ideas about which objects will best tell the story of this inner city area. Balsall Heath has a very diverse population and a particular aim of the project is to describe local heritage and history to more recently arrived residents. The area, which was the site of the city's first mosque, has one of the largest Muslim populations in Birmingham.

Reyahn King, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands, said: "Birmingham is a priority area for HLF support and we are delighted that, because of this project, local residents in Balsall Heath will play a fundamental role in creating a people's history of their district by selecting objects that stir memories, by curating an exhibition and recording their stories for future generations."

The 60 chosen objects will be backed up by recordings of residents' memories of living, going to school and working in the area over the past six decades. An early suggestion for an object to display is a simple light bulb drawing attention to the fact that it was not until the late 1960s that some local residents actually had electricity in their houses! Local volunteers will be trained up to research the area history and to conduct interviews. There will also be a photographic survey of the district with current day images compared with historic pictures of the local environment.

The exhibition of objects, images and recorded memories will run from March to July next year touring a number of local venues, including Balsall Heath library, the church centre and schools. An exhibition catalogue will also be available online for schools and community groups to use as an ongoing resource.

A local event that may find its way into the exhibition was the tornado which hit Balsall Heath and neighbouring districts in July 2005 leaving a trail of damage estimated at £40million. Patrick Baird, Chair of Balsall Heath Local History Society, said: "This will provide a wonderful opportunity for all residents of Balsall Heath to learn about the area's colourful and diverse changes and development over the past sixty years. The Local History Society cannot thank the Heritage Lottery Fund enough for its support and faith in us."

Further information

For further information please contact Vicky Wilford, HLF press office, on: 020 7591 6046 / 07973 401 937, email: vickyw@hlf.org.uk or Phil Cooper, HLF press office, on: 07889 949 173.