Bolton Museum's Egyptology Gallery wins Heritage Lottery Fund support

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Initial support, including a development grant of £115,300, has been awarded to help the council progress plans to apply for a further grant of £1.8million in 2014.

The overall project aims to:

- radically redesign the current gallery space including creating an additional floor to showcase and interpret Bolton's ancient Egyptian collection
- digitise items so they can be accessed via the museum's website
- conserve and improve the storage of the collection to ensure that it can be used as a cultural and scientific resource by future generations
- create and deliver a new education and family learning programme for children and adults based on the enhanced facilities
- involve local residents and organisations in the development and promotion of the new gallery through a variety of activities and volunteering opportunities

The project team will develop plans to expand the display area, creating two distinct zones on separate levels. Downstairs will be focused on Egyptian attitudes to the afterlife including the unique attraction of an exact re-creation of the burial chamber of Thutmosis III. In contrast to the dark and atmospheric lower gallery, the upper gallery will focus on ancient Egyptian life including food and drink, writing and home life.

It is hoped the new gallery will create a major visitor attraction for Bolton town centre. The digitisation of the collection should also encourage people from outside the borough to visit.

The project also aims to make the collection more accessible for people with disabilities by improving the layout and including more audio and visual information. The Egyptology collection is a legacy of the textile industry in Bolton. The collection was started by Annie Barlow, a member of the Barlow family that owned a successful mill company, who used to accompany her brother on trade visits to Egypt.

She began to help raise funds for the Egypt Exploration Society which gave objects to institutions or collectors who had funded their work. Annie Barlow asked for her share of the finds to be given to the Chadwick Museum, the Victorian forerunner of today's Bolton Museum. The items were later transferred to Bolton Museum in the mid-1950s.

Bolton Council's Cabinet Member for Culture, Cllr Chris Peacock, said: "This is fantastic news for Bolton Museum and we are delighted the HLF has granted us the first phase of funding. We have one of the most significant ancient Egyptian collections in the UK and the gallery is already hugely popular. This funding will enable us to enhance the visitor experience and improve access for everyone who wishes to view the collection. We've got lots of ideas on how we can expand the gallery and develop the digital side of things, so can reach an even larger audience. We're very excited about what the future holds for the gallery."

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: “We are delighted to be giving our initial support for this project that will open up the Egyptology Gallery at Bolton Museum for everyone to enjoy. If successful at second round, the newly digitised collections and learning programmes will really help to get young people excited about this fascinating part of history right here in Bolton and will continue Annie Barlow’s great legacy.”

Further information

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