Chester Farm secures support

08/10/2012

The Chester Farm project has been successful in securing a grant of £135,800 development funding, the initial support for a £4.1m HLF bid, following an application submitted by Northamptonshire County Council.

The project aims to open up the county council-owned site to the public so that everyone can benefit and learn from this hugely significant historical and archaeological site.

The initial funding will enable detailed development work to be undertaken. This will include comprehensive planning for the approach to interpretation of the site, including the innovative use of IT, together with an education and learning activities plan. It will also fund a study into the feasibility of locating a countywide archaeological archives store and public access point on the site.

The Chester Farm site, near Wellingborough, provides evidence of thousands of years of settlement, from at least Mesolithic times to the present day.

The site includes traces of Iron Age enclosures and ancient field systems. Below ground there is extensive Roman settlement including a Roman walled town and recent excavation has shown that key elements of the town, such as roads, temples and other buildings, have survived. There was also medieval settlement on the site including the remains of the deserted village of Chester-by-the-Water.

The site includes a complex of farm buildings, dating from the 17th to the 20th century together with the remains of formal gardens, orchard and parkland. Extensive ironstone extraction took place in the area during the late 19th and early 20th centuries and there are the remains of an ironstone tramway across the site.

Leader of Northamptonshire County Council Councillor, Jim Harker, said: “Chester Farm is a true heritage jewel, with over 2,000 years of history in one place.

“Its heritage survives under the ground, in the landscape, in the buildings, in the written archives, the maps and photographs and in people’s memories. Heritage Lottery Fund support is vital to this project, enabling us to open up and bring Chester Farm to life.

“Not only is the site of huge historical and archaeological significance, it also offers remarkable education and learning opportunities which we believe can play a role in supporting our rapidly growing county and helping everyone who lives here to understand the rich heritage of our county.”

Emma Sayer, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands, said: “The Chester Farm site is one of Northamptonshire’s archaeological gems and we’re pleased to be giving our initial support for plans to transform it into an archive centre and heritage attraction. Obviously it’s early days but this is a very positive first step and we’ll be working closely with the council in the coming months as the project develops further.”

Note to editors

A first-round pass means the project meets HLF criteria for funding and HLF believes the project has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for lottery money.

The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.

Further information

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