Community-run Town Hall gets Heritage Lottery Fund backing

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Trustees for Hebden Bridge Community Association, the charitable trust which runs the Grade II-listed building, have expressed their delight at the Heritage Lottery Fund decision, which includes a development grant of £29,900. The award opens the way for the Association next year, under the Heritage Lottery Fund's two-stage approach to funding applications, to submit a more substantial funding bid of £338,900 at a later date for restoration of the building and commemoration of its heritage.

Andrew Bibby, one of the Association's trustees, says: "We are delighted that Heritage Lottery Fund has endorsed our project in this way. Hebden Bridge is one of very few communities in Britain where the Town Hall is owned and run directly by the community, and we're determined to do all we can to protect this important part of our local heritage. The Town Hall has served our town for over 110 years, and our responsibility is to make sure it can fulfil its role for the twenty-first century as well".

The Town Hall passed to the Community Association from Calderdale council under a pioneering 'asset transfer' agreement in April 2010. Since then, the trustees have been focusing primarily on the new-build extension, currently under construction at the rear of the site. The extension, which includes a new public hall, meeting rooms and riverside courtyard, is scheduled to open next June.

With the construction work now well under way, the trustees have been able to turn their attention to the existing Town Hall building, erected in 1897 and 1898. The application to Heritage Lottery Fund, which the trustees will now be able to progress, focuses on work to restore the fine Victorian features of the building, including the mosaic floor tiles and the stained glass windows. The capital works on the fabric of the building will be linked to a community-based heritage activity and interpretation project.

"Our Town Hall has historically been a focal point of civic and community life in our town. We want to ensure that the role it has played, not least in developing strong local democratic traditions and public services, is appreciated and celebrated," Andrew Bibby adds.

Explaining the importance of the award, Fiona Spiers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for Yorkshire and the Humber, said: "We are delighted to give our initial support for this worthwhile project which aims to restore a well loved local landmark and Grade II listed Victorian building and bring it back into community use. We look forward to receiving a full application in the future."

The successful first-round pass achieved by the Community Association means that the proposed project meets HLF criteria for funding, and that HLF believes that that project has the potential to delivery high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The Town Hall application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement by HLF of the outline proposals. The project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.

Note to editors

Full details of the asset transfer and of Hebden Bridge Community Association can be accessed at www.hebdenbridgetownhall.org.uk.

Further information

Contact Andrew Bibby on 01422 845 799.