It’s a dream come true for Dreamland Margate

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Today, HLF has announced confirmed funding[1] of over £9m for three heritage projects in Margate, Stornoway and Portsmouth. The projects are:

- the transformation of Dreamland Margate into the world’s first amusement park of historic rides;
- restoring the impressive Lews Castle on the outskirts of Stornoway; and
- refurbishing the Museum of the Royal Navy to help tell its story more widely.

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said: “These projects have the potential to entertain, intrigue and delight. From Margate’s answer to an early Disneyland to a museum that reminds us of our impressive maritime heritage, they are all extremely important not only to the UK’s heritage but also to its tourist industry. The Heritage Lottery Fund has made this substantial investment because we believe that enhancing these sorts of places is crucial to their long-term survival, and will provide important training and employment opportunities for local people.”

Restoration of Dreamland Margate, Kent – confirmed grant of £3m
HLF’s grant will enable The Dreamland Trust to restore Dreamland Margate and transform it into the world’s first amusement park of historic rides. A variety of vintage rides, some of the last working examples of their kind, have been collected from across the UK including the 1914 Whip and the 1920s Caterpillar. These rides along with the Scenic Railway, the oldest surviving rollercoaster in the UK, and the listed menagerie cages will be fully restored.

A new learning space and exhibition will form a significant part of the project, providing visitors with a range of activities centred on the site’s intriguing seaside history. Up to 100 local volunteers will play an active role over the course of the project and will be involved with a variety of tasks from maintaining the extensive gardens to helping look after the historic archives.

Dreamland Margate, developed in the mid 19th century, was initially created as a pleasure garden and dance hall. It later became a menagerie and roller skating rink, run by the colourful circus entrepreneur ‘Lord’ George Sanger. The restored site, once known as a place that ‘gives happiness at a price that everyone can afford’, will sit alongside the newly opened Turner Contemporary gallery and the restored Old Town and will add to the wider regeneration of Margate.

Tracey Emin, Artist, said: “More great news for Margate! This will totally revamp and regenerate Dreamland and help bring it back to its former glory. Margate will soon play host to the perfect day out.”

Lews Castle and Museum nan Eilean, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis – confirmed grant of £4.6m
This innovative and ambitious project will enable the redevelopment and conservation of Lews Castle in Stornoway, an impressive Victorian structure currently on the ‘Buildings-at-Risk register’. The restored castle will provide a new home for Museum nan Eilean’s collections and archives and, for the first time, establish an integrated museum and archive service for the Outer Hebrides alongside a high quality new hotel venture.

The museum themes will focus on the island’s people and their close relationship with the land and sea. Collections on show will include archaeological finds and material telling the story of island industry, including the world famous Harris

Tweed. The distinctive Gaelic culture of the islands' communities will be explored, with Gaelic being used as the museum's primary language.

The project will benefit the island economy in many ways, providing a wide range of training opportunities including collections management and learning traditional building and conservation skills. Museum visitors will be able to get involved through a series of family days, interactive exhibitions and volunteering. The project will complement other heritage regeneration projects in the area including the Stornoway Townscape Heritage Initiative.

The National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth – confirmed grant of £1.4m
HLF's grant will help tell the story of the Royal Navy since 1900, a largely untold part of our maritime heritage. The 18th-century Storehouse 10, built in 1776, is one of the finest Georgian storehouses in the UK and will be restored providing new exhibition spaces for the museum's collections.

Storehouse 10 will be connected to Storehouse 11 enabling the museum to showcase four centuries of naval history properly for the first time. State-of-the-art interactive displays and exhibitions will help bring the collections alive and into the 21st century for everyone, especially young people, to learn from and enjoy.

During the project a variety of themed visitor activities will include: 'World at War', looking at the links between the Royal Navy and the rest of the world; 'Community Curators', helping local people to curate their own exhibitions; and the 'Sea Life and Community Road Show'; enabling local schools to get more hands on.

Notes to editors

- A confirmed award means that money had already been earmarked by HLF for the project in question and that the full amount has now been secured.
- Believed to date back to 1914 The Whip consists of two circular platforms turned by motors, which pull a cable that leads the cars around an oval steel track, whipping them as they circle each end.
- The 1914 Caterpillar is a circular ride running along an undulating track underneath a canopy. As part of the ride is in darkness, Caterpillars were particularly in favour with courting couples.
- 'Lord' George Sanger (23 December 1825 – 28 November 1911) was an English showman and circus proprietor.
- In 1991, the first Register of all listed buildings at risk in London was published.

Further information

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