Dukesfield project gets green light from Heritage Lottery Fund

21/06/2012

The Dukesfield Smelters and Carriers project, led by the Friends of the North Pennines in collaboration with Hexhamshire and Slaley Parish Councils, will now be able to create a detailed plan and submit a full grant application next winter to achieve the project's conservation and heritage goals. The project has the active support of the landowner, Allendale Estates.

Reacting to the news Ian Forbes, Chair of the Friends of the North Pennines, said "This is tremendous news for our project, and sets us up well to apply for a full grant. The Heritage Lottery Fund's decision is a tribute to the vision and work of the team in Hexhamshire and Slaley."

The Dukesfield lead smelting mill, by the banks of the Devil's Water south of Hexham, was once the Blackett family's largest mill throughout the 18th century, central to one of the most important concerns in the northern lead industry. Ore was carried in by packhorses from the dales to the south and west, and smelted lead carried on to the markets of Tyneside. Most of the routes used are now lost, and the significance of the imposing but overgrown, dilapidated and crumbling remains is little understood.

"This site, and its web of links from the hills and on to the east, was a central part of a vital trade before and during the industrial revolution" explained Hexhamshire Parish Councillor Greg Finch. "We want to conserve its physical remains, involve people in learning new skills in a range of conservation, research and heritage activities, find out about those who worked at Dukesfield and along the lead corridor from the North Pennines to Blaydon, and stimulate the exploration and understanding of the area and its past."

Ivor Crowther, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund North East, said: "We at the Heritage Lottery Fund are delighted to be supporting these initial plans to conserve and open up the rich heritage of Dukesfield Mill. The lead industry was hugely important in this area and right across the North East and its legacy should not be forgotten. We are looking forward to helping the Friends of the North Pennines AONB develop their exciting project that will pass on the history of our working past to future generations."

Notes to editors

The Friends of the North Pennines charity promotes the conservation, protection and improvement of the physical, natural and built environment in and around the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It has a particular interest in promoting the exploration and understanding of the North Pennines area, and achieves this by carrying out various projects, promoting and undertaking research, providing advice and training, publishing information and cooperating with other organisations.

Further information

Greg Finch, Friends of the North Pennines, 01434 607 490 / gregpfinch@hotmail.com or Laura Bates, HLF press office, 020 7591 6027 / LBates@hlf.org,uk.