

Elsecar beaming thanks to initial backing

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Plans to restore the site and establish it as a premier tourist destination were boosted last night, Wednesday 2 February, when Barnsley Museum and Heritage Service was awarded a first-round pass* with development funding of £40,500 from Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the project. The successful award means that planning for vital restoration work can now get underway. Work will begin on an application for a second-round pass from HLF, which if successful will secure a grant of just over £400,000 to support an exciting half-million pound project for the engine and wider village. This will include improved interpretation for visitors, opportunities for local school children to learn about the engine and its significance, and a new volunteering programme to be set up.

Fiona Spiers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for Yorkshire and Humber, said: "We're extremely pleased to give initial support to the Newcomen Engine at Elsecar project, which aims to protect a vital part of our industrial heritage for future generations. We look forward to receiving their application for a full grant in the future."

The last remaining example in situ anywhere in the world, the engine is situated in its original magnificent engine house, where it pumped water out of the Elsecar Colliery from 1795 to 1923, remaining in working order until the 1950s. In July 2010, the engine was put on the Heritage at Risk Register.

Elsecar was the industrial powerhouse of the famous Fitzwilliam dynasty, who lived at nearby Wentworth Woodhouse. The astonishing surroundings of the Newcomen Engine include ironworks, workshops, a canal, a colliery and the Fitzwilliam's family railway station. The village itself is an excellent example of an industrial model village, perhaps the earliest in England.

Cllr Bill Newman, spokesperson for Development, said: "A new vision has been established for Elsecar over the last two years, bringing together the immense potential of its heritage with the genuine prospect of sustainability. This is a crucial step in realising the full potential of this special place."

Notes to editors

*A first-round pass means the project meets our criteria for funding and we believe it 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.

On occasion an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their scheme.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 30,000 projects, allocating £4.5 billion across the UK, including £351 million in Yorkshire & the Humber alone. To date, HLF has made 123 awards in Barnsley amounting to just over £19 million.