Epping Forest 'Museum at the Core' wins major Lottery support

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The scheme, which will total £2.5million, will extend and develop the museum on its existing site, making both the building and the collections more accessible to all.

The project brings together the majority of the museum's collections on one site together with the creation of a community / education room, a new temporary exhibition gallery and an 'Explore' gallery providing access to the reserve collections. The additional space above the library in 37 Sun Street will create a wonderful cultural centre for local people and visitors in the heart of Waltham Abbey.

Developed jointly by the museum team with design company Outside Studios and architects Hawkins / Brown, the project will see the existing museum buildings remodelled, the installation of a lift to provide step free access throughout the entire building and improved visitor facilities. The oldest part of the museum, a historic Grade II* listed Tudor timber framed house dating to 1520, will be interpreted and displayed as a significant historical structure in its own right. The existing permanent exhibition galleries will be redisplayed, with a new selection of themes and objects.

Securing the additional space in 37 Sun Street over the Waltham Abbey library has been made possible by a capital funding commitment of £250,000 by Epping Forest District Council. The acquisition of the space has been assisted by Howard Green, of the property management agency Duncan Phillips Ltd, who acting on behalf of the vendors, made the original approach to the museum.

For the museum team this is the culmination of three years of work behind the scenes developing the schemes proposals, which have won wide backing from councillors, community groups, professional bodies and funding organisations as well as our existing audiences.

Cllr Brian Rolfe, Chairman of Epping Forest District Council, said: "This grant award is a fantastic reflection on how our Museum Service is recognised by major funders such as the Heritage Lottery Fund. Our users have been telling us how much they value the services we offer but would love for us to make the museum bigger. The fact that access to the upstairs galleries has only been by the central staircase has always been a real problem for our ability to provide a fully accessible service and this scheme now allows us to deal with this in the most satisfying manner."

The museum also runs a popular programme of family activities and events but has long been hampered by the lack of a designated room in which these can take place leading to events having to be held in gallery areas and weather permitting in the museum garden. The creation of a new room will allow this programme to develop and support the work the museum undertakes with schools and other educational and community groups allowing the museum to become even more of a community facility.

"The Museum at the Core" project is also designed to increase opportunities for volunteer involvement in the running of the museum. The HLF funding will allow for two new posts focused on audience development and supporting volunteer engagement, to be created and the acquisition of a new collections management system, which will enable the museum to make more information about the collections available to the public on line and through gallery terminals.

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: “We are delighted to award this grant to Epping Forest District Museum, which will allow for a enhanced visitor experience for everyone. With full access to the museum’s collections and a new community learning space the museum’s track record of excellent exhibitions and events will only get better. We look forward to the completed project.”

It is also anticipated that the larger museum will act as a significant tourism attraction in the heart of Waltham Abbey along with the range of other attractions in and around the town.

Proposals are for the museum to close in the autumn of 2013 to allow for clearance of the current displays and the main building works with the new museum reopening to the public for Easter 2015.

During the closed period the museum will continue to provide services through other buildings in the district and through the Lowewood Museum in Hoddesdon, which has been operated by the Epping Forest District Museum team since February 2012.

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.

The Epping Forest District Museum based in Waltham Abbey since 1981 tells the story of the Epping Forest District through its collections of over 50,000 objects including; art, archaeology, photographs, social history and documents. The museum which is housed in a Grade II* listed Tudor building, is part of Epping Forest Council. The museum also manages the Lowewood Museum in Hoddesdon on behalf of Broxbourne Borough Council. Further information can be found at Epping Forest Museum's website.

Further information

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