Fifteen Years Young

05/10/2009

Visitors to St George's Market on Saturday were treated to much more than apples and pears as young people from across Northern Ireland took part in live street art, multi cultural drumming workshops and performed a piece from a new heritage inspired play to mark the 15th anniversary of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Over 100 young people, who have all benefited from HLF funding, took part in the 'Fifteen Years Young' event to celebrate their involvement in heritage by showcasing their projects to their peers and the general public through the mixture of exhibitions and performance.

The projects showcased at the event were chosen to illustrate the breath of HLF's investment in, and the young people's involvement with, a wide range of heritage, from our natural landscapes and biodiversity to the history of people and places. The general public and invited guests, including the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, Patricia Lewsley joined members of Girlguiding Ulster, pupils from St Patrick's College, Dungannon, 'reporters' from the Verbal Arts Centre in Derry and Belfast City Council's 'Anti' group to celebrate the impact HLF funding has had on, and the benefits brought to young people and children.

Since 1994, HLF has committed £126 million and made over 1000 awards in Northern Ireland. 63% of all HLF funded projects have benefited young people and through its dedicated 'Young Roots' programme over 1,200 young people have played an active part in their own heritage projects.

Head of HLF Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, said: "St George's Market was the perfect venue for our 15th anniversary event as it received one of the first HLF awards in 1994. Its conservation has had a huge impact on the both the local community and the economy, and its success can be measured by the large number of visitors who enjoyed learning about the young people's projects and watching their performances.

"I would like to congratulate all of the young people for their real achievements within their projects and for their involvement in this fantastic event."

The general public were encouraged to join the celebrations by taking part in 'Bring-a-Thing' by bringing along any item that represents their heritage, and some unusual items were presented on the day including a prehistoric stone, antique jewellery, an autographed postcard and a poem about the city of Belfast. All of the items, and the memories and anecdotes as to why they were chosen, were recorded to create a lasting record of the diverse heritage of our society today.