Volunteers needed in upkeep of the Castle

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The 12th-century Castle is undergoing major restoration work thanks to the investment of £764,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The City and County of Swansea will use some of the grant to fund the employment of a Castle Community Co-ordinator to help engage the wider community in a new programme of activities.

Founded by William de Londres in the early 12th century, its origins are in the Norman conquest of Wales and it has visible remains from the 12th up to the early 14th century. The historic building is being conserved and a new indoor interpretation centre is being built within the disused chapel block which will provide hands on experiences for visitors.

The aim is to give visitors access to 95 per cent of the Castle and increase visitor numbers from 4,500 to 17,000 per year. There is currently a 24-strong group of committed volunteers, ranging in age from 20 to 77 years old, who manage the day-to-day running of the castle. The FOC need more volunteers to help visitors make the most of their experience by acting as tour guides, among other roles.

Roger Parmiter, who has been volunteering as a member of FOC for the last 13 years, shares his experience: “I was attending a Welsh History course at Swansea University and Oystermouth Castle formed part of my selected project work and, following a meeting with the Chair I was invited to join. Thirteen years on and I haven’t looked back.

“I’ve met people from all over the world through my work as a volunteer and every day is different. All new volunteers would be trained as guides on every feature of the castle and its history. First time visitors want to know lots of details about the history of the castle and that’s where we can help. Overseas visitors often ask ‘Who were the Normans?’

“Aside from tourists we also give guided tours to schools, diverse groups and organisations. We also put on medieval re-enactments for the public with our own living history group – Gwerin o Gwyr.

“With so much going on at the castle, now is a great time to get involved. There are opportunities to meet and work with archaeologists, historians and researchers and learn new skills. But what’s more it’s a great way to meet new people and we do have a lot of fun!”

Jennifer Stewart, Head of HLF in Wales, said: “Volunteers play a vital role in making the projects we invest in happen. Visitors want to experience our culture, our way of life. The best people to interpret our heritage for visitors are the men and women who live here and who take pride in the heritage that surrounds them on a daily basis. These people truly help to enhance the visitor experience and we are really pleased that there is already such enthusiasm within FOC. Oystermouth Castle is the largest castle open to the public in Swansea and this is the chance for local people to play a part in taking their local heritage forward.”

Cllr Graham Thomas, Swansea Council’s Cabinet Member for Culture, Recreation and Tourism, said: “It’s vital we look to the future in Swansea but it’s equally important we celebrate our proud heritage and this is why schemes of this nature should be welcomed.

“Oystermouth Castle is one of our historical gems and this scheme means the attraction will be conserved for future generations and will offer a visitor experience that’s befitting of the 21st Century."

Notes to editors

If you would like to get involved contact the Chairman Roger Parmiter at roger.parmiter@ntlworld.com or the Secretary, Dai Pennant at daipennant@hotmail.com

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 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

Further information

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