Exploring the First World War and its legacy - Engagement Centres announced

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In partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the Centres will support community First World War research projects, connecting academic and public histories of the First World War as part of the commemoration of the War's centenary which begins this year.

In June last year a major call was issued by the AHRC for proposals from consortia of research organisations to support and encourage the extensive interest in exploring the First World War and its legacy among communities across the UK. Following the call and subsequent peer review process, the following consortia have been selected to become Engagement Centres:

- Voices of War and Peace – University of Birmingham
- Gateways to the First World War – University of Kent
- Living Legacies 1914-18 – Queen's University Belfast
- Everyday Lives in War – University of Hertfordshire
- Centre for Hidden Histories – University of Nottingham

A key focus of the Engagement Centres will be to provide UK-wide support for community groups funded through a range of HLF funding programmes, particularly the new £6m First World War: Then and Now community grants scheme. During an initial start-up phase ahead of their formal launch later this year, the Centres will be extending links with the diverse programmes of community activities being planned to commemorate the centenary across the UK as well as developing international links.

The centres will form a part of the First World War Centenary Partnership, led by Imperial War Museums, and will complement other AHRC activities related to the centenary, including its collaboration with the BBC's World War One at Home Project.

Professor Mark Llewellyn, AHRC Director of Research, said: "The centenary of the First World War provides an occasion not only to commemorate its pivotal role in shaping the twentieth century but also to reflect on and reassess its legacy for the present. The distinctive combination of arts and humanities researchers and community groups working together to explore heritage has proved to be a powerful one. Through collaboration these new Engagement Centres will develop and foster rich and fascinating perspectives on the commemoration, including its meanings for contemporary culture and society."

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said: "We know just how valuable access to university researchers can be for communities exploring their local heritage. It provides them with additional skills and confidence to bring an extra dimension to their projects. HLF has already funded hundreds of community projects exploring aspects of the First World War and we're excited to see how these will develop further with the help of this unique partnership."

Professor Andrew Thompson, Leadership Fellow for AHRC's Care for the Future theme, said: "The centenary of the First World War provides a major opportunity for historians to reflect on its impact at the time as well as its lasting

legacies, and to do so in such a way as to fully engage the public in that process. Together, the 100th anniversary of the war, and the formation of these Engagement Centres, promises to bring new insights into the complexities of commemorating a conflict, the interpretation of which has never been settled, and which continues today to provoke different and diverse reactions in the public and the political domain."

The Engagement Centres are funded through a joint initiative of the cross-Research Council Connected Communities programme and the AHRC's Care for the Future theme.

Notes to editors

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funds world-class, independent researchers in a wide range of subjects: ancient history, modern dance, archaeology, digital content, philosophy, English literature, design, the creative and performing arts, and much more. This financial year the AHRC will spend approximately £98m to fund research and postgraduate training in collaboration with a number of partners. The quality and range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK. Arts and Humanities Research Council website.

Further information

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