£1million lottery grant to restore picturesque Portaferry

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Last year HLF endorsed Portaferry Regeneration Limited's initial proposals to transform the conservation area, and following 12 months of detailed planning and development the full award has now been secured.

The funding was awarded through HLF's Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) programme, which supports the regeneration of conservation areas that have suffered from serious social and economic decline. THI encourages partnerships of local organisations to carry out repairs and other works to a number of historic buildings, structures or spaces within these defined areas to aid wider regeneration.

Commenting on the announcement, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, said: "This investment is fantastic news for Portaferry and the Ards Peninsula and we are delighted to be involved in supporting the restoration and preservation of the town's historic heritage.

"The THI will boost community pride, create additional employment and training opportunities and enable the town to capitalise on its huge tourism potential. It will help to re-establish Portaferry as an attractive, prosperous town and will improve the quality of life for all those who live, work or visit there."

Located on the shores of Strangford Lough, Portaferry was once a thriving port that today boasts a large concentration of late Georgian and early Victorian buildings which create a unique townscape of immense charm and beauty. Over the years many of these historic properties have fallen into disrepair and are now lying derelict and unused.

The THI will focus on regenerating the commercial core of the town which gives the area its picture-postcard charm. Priority has been given to bringing back into sustainable use redundant or underused historic buildings to preserve the built heritage and breathe new life into the area.

A range of educational activities and events, including practical training days, treasure hunts and guided heritage walks, are planned to involve the local community in the transformation of their town. An outreach programme will also be undertaken to engage with local schools and colleges to increase opportunities for learning about and, involvement in, the heritage of the area.

Doug Edmondson, chairman of Portaferry Regeneration Limited, welcomed the news and said: "This is a great achievement for Portaferry, it offers a splendid opportunity to reinvigorate the local economy and preserve our built heritage. The boarded-up windows will gradually disappear as buildings are returned to full economic use, providing much-needed construction jobs in the short term as well as providing long term employment prospects and restoring a sense of pride in our town.

A far-reaching Education and Training Programme will run in parallel to benefit local schools and colleges, helping to promote better understanding of our heritage and encouraging the retention of traditional skills. This scheme has the potential to benefit everyone in the community and we should all welcome it with open arms. We are grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund, and to partnership funder Ards Borough Council for their generous support."

It is hoped the scheme, which will conclude in 2016, will inspire an improved approach to the long-term management of the conservation area through the promotion of proper maintenance and good conservation practice.

Further information

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