Gravesham scores a heritage project hat trick

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Stories associated with Gravesend's Old Town Hall will be gathered so that visitors can find out more about local life over the past 250 years. Residents of Northcourt Estate will be tracing the social history of the people that have lived there since the 1930s, and a group of young people will research how the traditional fashions of African migrants have evolved and been influenced by western styles.

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East England, said: "We are delighted to have received these three projects following the work we have been doing to encourage more organisations to come forward in an area where previously there were fewer applications for grants.

"These separate projects encompass a wide sweep of Gravesham's history from the mid 18th century to the present day; from its grand town hall to the homes of ordinary local people, and from its original residents to those welcomed from abroad."

The **Talking Halls** project, managed by interfaith charity Whole Community Works, has been awarded £50,000 to look into the history of the Old Town Hall which was erected in 1764. Volunteers will work with a heritage specialist to unlock the history of the building and convert their discoveries into a leaflet, a website and information on the building itself. The volunteers will also be trained to give guided tours around the building on open days.

For Whole Community Works, Nadia Ammar, said: "The Old Town Hall has been returned to its original splendour after years of disuse, and this project will give the community the opportunity to learn about its spectacular past as well as welcome it back as part of the present-day life of Gravesham. This project helps ensure a significant part of Gravesham's history remains within the hearts and minds of citizens and visitors today."

The **Northcourt Social History Project** will be run by the Riverside Community Resource Trust which has received a £49,900 grant and will cover the lives and experiences of residents on the 350-home estate. The whole community will be given the chance to get involved in a project that will record interviews with older residents, collect photographs and archive film footage and maps, and a range of historical artefacts.

The wealth of material gathered will be used to create an exhibition and road show and an education pack for local schools. Information will also appear on the Discover Gravesham and other local history websites. All the material will be stored for future reference with the Gravesham Library Group and the Riverside Centre.

Commenting for the Riverside Community Resource Trust Alan Ridgers, said: "This money will provide an opportunity for the whole community of the Northcourt area to research and be involved with the recording and writing about their own social history. The Traveller families also have an unusual story to tell which is all a part of Gravesham's heritage."

The third project is the **Evolution of African fashion – Tradition to Street** and organisers BME Concern have been awarded a £24,800 grant under HLF's Young Roots programme. The young people taking part will research the different ways in which African-Caribbean migrants have worn their traditional costumes since the late 1950s and how their styles have influenced or been influenced by UK customs and fashions. The young participants will produce a DVD based on their research and interviews and are also planning an end-of-project fashion show next October.

For BME Concern, Anne Phillips, said: “This project would never have been possible without this award, our gratitude to Young Roots, for making this project possible.’’

Commenting on the grant awards, Gravesham MP Adam Holloway, said: "I am delighted to see that so much money is coming our way for these three projects, and much look forward to seeing the results."

Gravesham’s priority area status with the Heritage Lottery Fund means extra support and advice is available for applicants wishing to develop projects in the borough. For more information, or to discuss ideas, please contact Anna Jarvis, Development Officer for Gravesham, on 0207 591 6048 or annaj@hlf.org.uk

Notes to editors

Two further Gravesham projects have been given HLF funding earlier this year:

- A plan to produce audio commentaries for three of Gravesham’s historic places has won £50,000 backing. Talking the Walk is being managed by Gravesham Borough Council involving the New Tavern Fort, Milton Chantry and a walking tour of the Town and Riverside area. The audio guides will offer visitors an engaging and interactive experience with informative commentaries including versions specifically for children.
- St. Aidan’s Parochial Church Council was awarded a £36,200 grant for the project Games and Planes – 1940s memories of Gravesend which is collecting and preserving the memories of people living in the Westgate area during the Second World War. The area was bombed on a number of occasions by German planes that were unable to reach their London targets and dropped their bombs around the area before returning to their bases.

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 more than 33,900 projects, allocating over £4.4billion across the UK, with over £428 million granted in the South East alone.

Further information

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Alan Ridgers, Northcourt Social History project on 07811 067 734.

Anne Phillips Evolution of African Fashion project on 07903 802 339.