HLF celebrates 15th anniversary with news of support for six projects across the UK

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is celebrating its 15th anniversary this week by announcing a £4.8m grant[1] for Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and first-round passes[2] for Stonehenge, London's Charles Dickens Museum, Penarth Pavilion in South Glamorgan, Colchester Castle Museum and Torre Abbey in Torbay.

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund, said "I can think of no more fitting way of celebrating 15 years of the Heritage Lottery Fund than by supporting some of our most precious heritage from Stonehenge and Colchester Castle to Charles Dickens. Over that time our £4billion investment has made a huge impact on the landscape of the UK's heritage meaning there's much to celebrate today!"

Birmingham Museum and Gallery (BMAG) – confirmed grant of £4.8m
This museum plays an extremely important role in the city with over half a million visitors each year. It recounts Birmingham's diverse and complex history and is proud of fostering good community relations. HLF's grant means that imaginative plans can now go ahead to rejuvenate and open up Birmingham History Collections, comprising objects dating from 1500 to the present day.

The following five projects have received initial HLF support and will now move to the next stage of their development plans before a final funding decision is made:

Stonehenge, Wiltshire – initial support for a £4.95m HLF bid
Stonehenge is one of the world's most important and loved archaeological sites. English Heritage's project, in partnership with a range of stakeholders such as the National Trust and Natural England, will vastly improve the setting of the Stones and provide a state-of-the-art visitor centre. Originally constructed over 4,500 years ago, Stonehenge now has World Heritage Site status and receives nearly 900,000 visitors each year.

Charles Dickens Museum, London – initial support for a £1.77m HLF bid, including £99,000 development funding
Charles Dickens is one of the UK's most famous writers, responsible for classics such as A Christmas Carol and Oliver Twist. The Museum will use its initial funding from HLF to develop plans to radically transform and increase display areas and improve the overall visitor experience.

Simon Callow, actor and writer, commented "Interest in Dickens has never been higher, and nowhere can one find a more vivid and personal sense of what he was like and how he lived than in his first London house. I am delighted to hear news of the Heritage Lottery Fund's initial support for this innovative project which would include the expansion of the Museum's educational work."

Penarth Pavilion Project, South Glamorgan – initial support for a £1.63m HLF bid, including £99,600 development funding
The Grade II listed Pavilion on Penarth Pier was constructed in an intriguing combination of Art Deco/Moorish style with pinnacled Moghul-style roofs. The historic fabric of the building is currently at risk of decay and Penarth Arts and Crafts

Ltd plans to repair it as well as transform the site into a focal point for community and heritage activities. The restoration of this South Wales landmark will be fundamental to the town's seafront regeneration.

Colchester Castle, Essex – initial support for a £1.87m HLF bid, including £265,300 development funding
Colchester Castle is one the UK's finest surviving Norman buildings and shares a ground plan, and possibly the same architect, with the White Tower in London. The Castle's museum, a popular local attraction, tells the story of the early development of Colchester, Roman Britain's first capital, and is particularly important for its collections of Iron Age and early Roman finds from Colchester and Essex. Urgently in need of refurbishment to update both the building and its displays, HLF's initial support means that the Museum can now take the next steps towards achieving this transformational project.

Torre Abbey, Torbay – initial support for a £2.95m HLF bid, including £124,000 development funding
Torre Abbey is testament to 800-years of history in Devon. Originally a monastery and then a Georgian country house, it has a wonderful medieval gatehouse and 'Spanish Barn', used to hold prisoners of war after the Spanish Armada in 1588. Plans include restoration to the building as well as improvements to educational and learning activities. This second phase of work follows an earlier three-year restoration project, supported by HLF with a grant of £4.9m, and completed in 2008.

Notes to Editors

- [1] A confirmed award means that money had already been earmarked by HLF for the project in question and that the full amount has now been secured.
- [2] A first-round pass means the project meets our criteria for funding and we believe it has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.