HLF digs deep for coal dynasty’s former home

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The grant will support the hard-work of local volunteers who have campaigned to protect the future of the building.

Insole Court, a Victorian house that's surrounded by Grade II* listed gardens located in Llandaff, Cardiff, was built for a wealthy coal dynasty in 1856 and is a symbol of South Wales' rich industrial past.

The volunteer-led Insole Court Trust and Cardiff Council will use the funds to restore the buildings and gardens, and transform an at risk stable block into a centre for the local community, events, community businesses and social enterprises.

The trust was formed by members of the local community in 2011 with the aim of returning the building to its former glory and expanding its current community use. As part of the project, the management of the house will be transferred from Cardiff Council to the trust on behalf of the community.

Seven jobs will also be created at the Court, including a full-time management position and part-time roles to help manage volunteers, social enterprises, marketing and events, learning and outreach, and site administration.

Staff will be supported by more than 100 Insole Court volunteers, who will play an active role in the delivery of the project. Around half of these volunteers will take part in training to develop new skills in areas such as horticulture, archive management, research and visitor guiding. Young people will also be given the chance to take part in volunteering at the site through support from Cardiff Council.

Dr Manon Williams, Chair of HLF Wales, said: "We often say that people are at the heart of HLF projects and this project really demonstrates that. The Insole Court Trust has shown how communities can play a crucial role in protecting their local heritage, ensuring the stories and buildings from our past are saved and shared.

"As well as repairing and finding new uses for this historic building, the project will provide training opportunities for the volunteers so that they have the skills needed to care for the house and gardens, get the community involved and attract thousands of additional visitors each year, and in doing so securing the future of Insole Court."

The grant will fund urgent repair work to the mansion's interiors, opening up rooms that have been closed for more than 30 years. It will also be used to improve signage and displays, and support a new learning and events programme to help attract an additional 30,000 visitors per year.

Captain Sir Norman Lloyd-Edwards, Chairman of Insole Court Trust, said: "The trust has worked astonishingly hard to secure the funding in such a short space of time and we're all delighted. The restoration and building work can now begin as we enter a new and exciting phase in the story of Insole Court, which has finally been secured for, and on behalf of, the local community."

Cabinet Member for Sport, Leisure and Culture, Cllr Huw Thomas, added: "I am delighted that HLF has awarded Insole Court Trust a grant to progress with their renewal project. Cardiff Council has been continuously working together with the trust to secure financial backing and I hope that this latest announcement will give confidence to other funding providers in order for the project to be completed. Insole Court is an important Cardiff landmark and the repair and

refurbishment of the facility will be an asset to the city as well as being an invaluable feature in the heart of the community."

Notes to editors

HLF has made 147 awards in Cardiff amounting to more than £27.7m of funding.

Insole Court was built in 1856 by wealthy coal entrepreneur James Harvey Insole.

The house was heavily influenced in its design by William Burges, who is best known for his work at Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch.

Through the rest of the 19th century and into the early 20th century, James Harvey and his son George Frederick extended and improved the house and gardens to the fashions of their day: first Victorian Gothic by James and then Neo-Georgian by George Frederick.

The Old Dining Room, Smoking Room and Library are some of the rooms to have survived and still feature their highly decorative and ornamental Gothic detailing today.

The grand Victorian and Edwardian garden features extensive rockwork which was introduced as a habitat for Violet Insole's collection of irises, alpines and rock plants. The garden still features a wide variety of ornamental trees and shrubs that reflect the original design.

Play your part in the future of Insole Court: Whether you're looking to volunteer in your spare time or want to fundraise for a local good cause, get involved and play a part in the future of Insole Court.

Neil Richardson, Project Director for Insole Court Trust, said: "This is an important step towards the renewal of Insole Court but there is still a great deal of hard work ahead. A fundraising group is being set up as we need to raise £500,000 to show the community support for the project. Anyone wishing to donate money or volunteer to help at this exciting time should get in touch."

Rosemary Scadden, volunteer Welcomer Guide, said: "I love volunteering at Insole Court as I'm passionate about local history and feel it is a privilege to be involved at the start of such an exciting project. I'm looking forward to training to be one of the new tour leaders for the restored heritage rooms in the house and we'll be learning how to set up and run the new visitor centre. Volunteering is a wonderful way to meet interesting people, learn new skills, help my local community, broaden my horizons and make new friends."

To make a donation or to find out about volunteer opportunities, email info@insolecourt.com or visit the Insole Court website.

Further information

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