Keeping the Past Alive at Stafford Castle

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The brainchild of a partnership between Business and Education Together (BE Together) and Stafford Borough Heritage Department, the project will involve 100 young people aged 11 to 13 in a quest to discover more about Stafford's historic ruin and present their findings in a way that will appeal to the wider community, including those of their own age.

The 'Keeping the Past Alive' project will set the youngsters a task of bringing fresh ideas to the way in which the castle's heritage is presented to increase visitor interest in a site that dates back to the Norman period in the 1100s.

Supported by adult volunteers and heritage experts the young people will be involved in the creation of a series of information panels for permanent display around the castle Keep, develop a Next Steps activity trail for children with an accompanying booklet and put together a virtual learning tour of the Keep.

They will also get involved in the planning and organisation of a castle open day next year, prior to which their various achievements will be given an initial airing during Heritage Week which takes place towards the end of February. An additional 200 young people will be recruited to help with this.

Stafford Castle's chequered history will give the youngsters plenty of scope. Originally built as a timber fort in the Norman motte and bailey style on an artificial hill, it was upgraded in 1347 with a massive stone Keep. This was abandoned to Parliamentary forces during the civil war in the mid-17th century and fell into decay. Rebuilt as a Gothic replica of a medieval fortress in 1813, it was never completed and fell into ruin during the 20th century.

The castle grounds, which extend to 26 acres, including woodland, are said to be one of the best surviving examples of Norman earthworks in the country.

For the Heritage Lottery Fund, Head of HLF West Midlands, Anne Jenkins, said: "This project gives many young people an opportunity to develop an interest in local history, to interpret it in a manner that appeals to them, and leave a permanent record of their involvement for the benefit of others."

For BE Together, Shan Jones, said: "Our partnership is delighted to have been successful in gaining funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to put this project into action. The benefits of the project will be longstanding and will have a significant impact on all the young people involved and ultimately on future visitors to Stafford Castle."

Notes to editors

Using money raised through the National Lottery, since 1994 the Heritage Lottery Fund has not only revitalised hundreds of museums, parks, historic buildings, landscapes and wildlife sites, but has also given new meaning to heritage itself. People from every walk of life are now involved with the heritage that inspires them, making choices about what they want to keep and share from the past, for future generations. HLF has supported more than 33,900 projects, allocating over £4.4billion across the UK, including £317million to projects in the West Midlands region alone.

Further information

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