Lottery millions for three local heritage projects

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The Railway Preservation Society of Ireland (RPSI) 2020 project was awarded £1.64million; the Old Church School Project Ballymoney is to benefit from a £542,500 windfall and the Connecting History project at the Ulster Museum will receive £454,800.

Commenting on the announcement, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, said: “We are delighted to be supporting these three projects that will make a lasting difference to local communities in Northern Ireland. This multi-million pound investment in our heritage will help to preserve and share our industrial heritage, save and reuse a historic building and add a new dimension to the Ulster Museum.

“Beyond preserving the heritage our investment will act as a catalyst to stimulate wider regeneration, create employment, provide training and learning opportunities, host a range of new activities and events and support local people as they get actively involved in their past.

The three projects receiving support through our Heritage Grants programme are:

RPSI 2020, RPSI - £1,644,400
The RPSI was established in 1964 and is an all-island voluntary organisation dedicated to the conservation and operation of heritage trains. This project will secure the railway heritage in Ireland for generations by enhancing the conservation and engineering facilities at the RPSI’s accredited Museum in Whitehead. The improved visitor facilities will draw more people into the Whitehead area to view and learn about our railway heritage.

The project will utilise the museum’s collections which consist of numerous locomotives, carriages, wagons and departmental vehicles formerly used on railway systems throughout Ireland from the 1880s to the 1980s. An extensive programme of interpretation, education and events will be delivered including additional mainline excursions on new routes, living history and themed days and a schools programme. Guided and self-guided tours of the Whitehead site and Railway Workshop will be offered and opportunities for volunteers to get involved in the project will also be created.

Old Church School Project Ballymoney, St Patrick’s Church of Ireland - £542,500
Built in the grounds of St Patrick’s Parish Church in 1874, the Old School has been derelict since the early 1970s. The project will restore the building to its former glory thorough an extensive programme of capital works which will see the school removed from the Built Heritage at Risk Register for Northern Ireland (BHARNI), safeguarding its future and providing a space for the local community to use and enjoy.

This project will complement the wider regeneration work taking place in Ballymoney through HLF’s Townscape Heritage Initiative investment of £1.29million. The restored building will be used to provide space for a host of community services including debt advice, a healthy living programme and young mothers’ programme. It will also be used to house a genealogy service which will allow people to research their heritage using church records and graveyards maps. Interpretation will be used to raise awareness of, and share the heritage of the school building, adjacent church and graveyard.

Connecting History, National Museums Northern Ireland – £454,800
Over 1.8million visitors have experienced the Ulster Museum since it reopened in 2009, and this project will provide greater access to and appreciation of its history collections. It will connect people to history in ways that are accessible, engaging, relevant and meaningful. It will reshape the modern history galleries at the Ulster Museum to meet the challenge of forthcoming anniversaries and in particular the decade 2012-2022 which includes the Home Rule Crisis, First World War and Easter Rising through to Partition and its aftermath. The three main elements of the project include changes to the galleries; a programme of collection digitisation; and a five year long programme of activities to promote formal and informal learning opportunities around these new resources.

Another two projects also received initial support[1] and can now progress plans in order to apply for a full HLF grant.

Natural Heritage Skills Training, TCV The Conservation Volunteers – first round pass of £201,800 with development grant of £5,800
This project will deliver a programme of training across Northern Ireland for land owners and managers in the knowledge and skills needed to manage the natural environment to improve and enhance biodiversity.

On the Brink: The Politics of Conflict 1914-1916, Ballymena Borough Council – first round pass of £154,800 including a development grant of £6,000
This three year project led by Mid-Antrim Museums Service with Causeway Museum Service will explore with local communities the impact and legacy of the outbreak of the First World War, the Battle of the Somme and the Easter Rising within a local, national and international context.

Notes to editors

Initial support 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.

Further information

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