# Major centre for black history and culture to be created

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Funding worth more than £5m is being given to support the development of the Black Cultural Archives (BCA) in Brixton, it was announced today. The BCA archive collection numbers over 10,000 historical archive documents, spanning some five centuries, from letters and personal papers to periodicals, ephemera and photographs.

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has confirmed a £4m grant* and the Mayor of London a further £1m. This investment will help turn currently derelict Grade II Raleigh Hall in Windrush Square into a permanent home for BCA's wide-ranging collection of historical material relating to black Britain and the African diaspora.

The London Borough of Lambeth** is also providing a financial package of £910,000 over five years, and has gifted a 99-year lease for Raleigh Hall, whose transformation will provide a much-needed educational resource, including a reference library, for schools, students and the general public.

Wesley Kerr, Chairman of the Heritage Lottery Fund's Committee for London, said: "The Black Cultural Archive's wonderful and growing collection is cherished by the local community and reflects the important contribution black Britons have made to all aspects of life in London and throughout the UK. The Heritage Lottery Fund grant enables Brixton's Raleigh Hall to be transformed into an inspiring permanent home for this unique archive and to become an easily accessible gateway to the history and heritage we all share. We are delighted to be supporting plans to make the archive widely available, and to create an exhibition and learning space, for many years to come."

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said: "I am pleased to support the development of the Black Cultural Archives, which will house a wealth of historical material about the contribution of black people to British society. It will be a wonderful new cultural centre for London, but also for the UK, giving scholars a greater understanding of our country's rich heritage and inspiring people of all ages and communities."

Over the past 29 years, the BCA has amassed a varied and unique collection of material relating to the lives of people of African and African-Caribbean descent in the UK. An important aspect of this project is the provision of storage space for committed archive donors with a specific interest in a black cultural archive's centre.

The BCA archive collection covers five centuries of history with records relating to the Transatlantic Slave Trade, including the Gale papers - a series of indentures relating to plantations in Jamaica owned by the Gale family and their descendents, notebooks and memorabilia owned by a middle-class Edwardian family, the Barbour-James and documents which tell the story of more recent 20th-century history, including those of Len Garrison, community activist, academic and founder of the BCA.

Matthew Ryder, Chairman of the Black Cultural Archives, said: "The movement of BCA to a permanent, purpose built home, is itself an historic moment. We believe it will enable the BCA to become a global resource and a leading heritage site in London. It is a very exciting time and the support has been overwhelming."

Councillor Steve Reed, Lambeth Council Leader, said: “Lambeth Council is immensely proud that the National Black Heritage Centre will be built in Brixton, the spiritual capital of Britain’s black community. The Council has gifted the old Raleigh Hall building to the community so that it can be the home to this major new national institution.

"People of black heritage will be able to come and explore their own history, while people of other backgrounds will be able to come and celebrate the major contribution Britain’s black communities have made to our national life and our shared culture.

"Thanks to the strong partnership between our council and the community, it’s very exciting that funding is now in place so that, in a few short years, visitors will be able to walk across the newly opened Windrush Square, named in honour of the first arrivals from the Caribbean, into the country’s first National Black Heritage Centre right here in Brixton.”

Raleigh Hall’s re-development, which means the building will be removed from the ‘At Risk’ register3, also feeds into plans for the wider regeneration of Brixton. It is anticipated that it will be the ‘jewel in the crown’ of this iconic part of London alongside Lambeth Town Hall, the Tate Library, Brixton Academy and the Ritzy Cinema.

In addition to visiting the archives where admission will be free to an exciting programme of changing exhibitions, there will be a range of educational and public events on offer at the National Black Heritage Centre.

**Notes to editors**

***** 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.

** Over the past five years the BCA project has received considerable support from the London Borough of Lambeth through the Council’s Communities First programme.

The annual ‘Buildings at Risk’ register brings together information on all Grade I and II listed buildings known to English Heritage to be ‘at risk' through neglect and decay.

HLF has been a long-term supporter of the BCA and to date has awarded grants totalling £4.6m.

The BCA funding package is completed with £50,000 from the Garfield Weston Foundation, £100,000 from the Foyle Foundation and £500,000 from Biffa.

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 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

**Further information**

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