Masters House project wins Heritage Lottery support

04/01/2012

A development grant of £39,300 has been awarded to help Herefordshire Council progress their plans to apply for a full grant of £995,700 next year.

The project aims to carry out a full conservation repair of the Grade II-listed building and preserve its heritage for future generations. Once completed, the medieval core of the building should be visible to the public for the first time in hundreds of years as well as serving as a hub for statutory and voluntary sector organisations to serve the local community.

This hub will be accessible to all and include a public library service, registrar's service and ceremony space, a localities office and customer services as well as offices for Ledbury Voluntary Action.

The full HLF grant will focus on the second phase of the restoration programme, specifically the medieval section of the building including the roof, timber frame repairs and external elevations.

There are also plans for a dedicated storage and display area for the John Masefield Archive, making these documents accessible to the public for the first time. Funding will also be requested for a range of learning and community participation events that will encourage the community to learn more about the heritage of the Masters House and the history of Ledbury.

Contractors Speller Metcalfe are already working on phase one of the project which concerns the renovation of the Victorian wing of the building. This is expected to be completed in April 2012 and then services in the medieval part of the building will move to this area during phase two.

Updates on progress can be found at the Ledbury Master's House BlogSpot where latest photographs and news will be posted and interested parties can also have their say.

The development funding will be used to work with stakeholders and the community to ensure the history of the Masters House is interpreted in an accessible and appropriate way as well as consulting over how to attract as many visitors to the building as possible.

Ledbury Localities Working Group will also, in conjunction with Friends of the Masters House, other heritage providers, the community and school, develop a plan for the second stage of the HLF application process as well as ensure the public are kept informed about the project.

Roger Phillips, Herefordshire Council's cabinet member for enterprise and culture, said: "We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us this support. This project offers us the opportunity to preserve the Masters House for people to visit and also ensure it is sustainable into the future by becoming a hub for statutory and voluntary services. We will continue to keep people involved as the process progresses and plan to be in a strong position to bid for the rest of the HLF grant money in six to nine months' time,"

Explaining the importance of the award, Anne Jenkins, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for the West Midlands, said:

“We are pleased to give our initial support to this project which aims to restore and interpret this rare surviving medieval timber framed building in Ledbury. While there is much work to be done, we look forward to receiving a full application from Herefordshire Council for the Master’s House in the future.”

Further information

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