Multimillion-pound boost for King’s Lynn’s heritage

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The Borough Council of King’s Lynn & West Norfolk has been successful in securing almost £3million from Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to undertake two exciting projects that will enhance the King's Lynn St Margaret’s Conservation Area, remodel the Saturday Market Place and restore the town hall complex as a centre for the cultural life of the town.

Cllr Nick Daubney, Leader of the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk, said: “Such a major investment in our heritage is absolutely fantastic news for the town. Together the schemes will support the restoration of the historic fabric of the area and allow people greater access to our fascinating collections and archives.

The Heritage Lottery Fund grants, alongside the borough council’s investment, will unlock the potential of these important heritage assets, benefitting the town culturally and economically.”

Philip Venning, Committee Member for the Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: “I’m delighted to see these two projects get funding. They will provide much needed investment to the town centre. King’s Lynn has some wonderful heritage which HLF has previously supported such as at the Walks, Redmount Chapel, St Nicholas’s Chapel, the Custom House, Greyfriars Tower and Lynn Museum.

These grants demonstrate how valuing heritage can bring real benefits, and the council’s vision for these latest exciting and vibrant schemes will help to transform the town into a cultural and tourist destination for everyone to enjoy.”

The schemes

King’s Lynn Townscape Heritage Initiative
A £1m Heritage Lottery Fund grant, made possible through the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) grant programme, has been awarded to a scheme which will enhance and protect the heritage of the St Margaret’s Conservation Area in King's Lynn and stimulate economic activity and community use of it.

The St Margaret’s Conservation area is pivotal in the town centre and includes the traditional shopping streets of Tower Street, St James’ Street and the south end of High Street, as well as the Saturday Market Place. The area features a wealth of historic buildings, 92 of which are listed (7 Grade I, 15 Grade II* and 70 Grade II) as well as two Scheduled Ancient Monuments: Trinity Guildhall and Greyfriars’ Tower.

Cllr Alistair Beales, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Industrial Assets, said: "We are working to showcase King's Lynn's impressive heritage. This latest investment will help to transform the St Margaret's area of the town and when taken alongside other schemes such as the Tuesday Market Place enhancements, help to put King's Lynn on the map as a heritage destination."

Match funded by the borough council, the scheme will provide a fund of more than £1.5 million from which owners and leaseholders of eligible properties in the area can bid for grants to make authentic restorations and repairs or carry out works that bring properties back into use.

Properties which are in critical need of repair or enhancements and which have a significant impact on the character of the area will be given priority. All works covered by the scheme must be completed by 2019.

An appraisal and management plan, assessing the historical and cultural significance of the area, has been created to help guide the project.

Property owners and leaseholders of historic buildings will be able to apply for grants to make structural and external repairs to historic buildings, restore architectural features, bring vacant buildings back into use, and restore historic shop fronts.

Training opportunities and community initiatives will also be developed as part of the project. This will include enabling young people studying crafts and trades locally to learn about traditional and specialist restoration procedures, including the use of authentic materials such as lime mortar. There will be creative projects involving young people and the wider community to encourage more people to find out about the history of the area.

The project officer will contact all eligible property owners in the coming months, outlining how to apply for grants. In due course, application forms will be available on the borough council's website.

Stories of Lynn – The Town Hall complex and Saturday Market Place
A grant of £1,850,600 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, £800,000 from the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk and investments from other funders will be used to develop the Stories of Lynn project.

Costing £2.9million, in total, the project will bring to life the stories of local people documented in the town's impressive archive. King's Lynn was once a port of medieval importance, and the project will enable the story of the town's civic, social, economic and political life to be told. The project will increase public access to collections and remodel three listed buildings that make up the town hall complex - the Grade I listed Guildhall, civic regalia collections and borough archives - making it a gateway attraction echoing its historical role at the heart of town life.

Core to the scheme is the development of a new Stories of Lynn exhibition. Based on the archives stored in the building, an interactive, multi-media exhibition will be developed, bringing to life the stories and experiences of the people who have created King's Lynn. The exhibition will give community access to the collections housed within the town hall and act as a platform for learning about the buildings' significance to local life.

During the works the vaulted structure of the undercroft of the 15th-century Trinity Guild Hall, which is at the centre of the complex, will be revealed, enabling people to appreciate the architecture of the building. It will also create an extensive exhibition space with room to accommodate visiting exhibitions and will allow treasures such as the King John Cup and extensive silver spoon collection to be showcased in creative and engaging new ways.

A new extension, housing a lift and stairs, will be added to the rear of the Old Gaol House, subject to planning approval, providing easy access to the historic first floor of the building.

Working with the Norfolk Record Office and Norfolk Museum Service, an archive/collections resources area, where the public will be able to view the archives free of charge, will also be created alongside an environmentally controlled document storage area. Currently, public access to the archives, which contain a wealth of material including internationally significant documents such as the Red Register, is limited.

The Norfolk Record Office will provide full-time staffing and expertise along with thousands of digitized images from key documents. A programme of education opportunities including 'ask the experts' sessions and themed masterclasses will also be developed to enable people to appreciate and interpret the documents. In addition, an outreach programme will be developed with the aim of encouraging new audiences to explore Kings' Lynn's heritage and to take advantage of

learning and development opportunities. This will reflect the main functions of the buildings in the past, including its economic, cultural and social functions.

The revitalised complex will act as a gateway to the town's other heritage sites including the Red Mount Chapel, neighbouring King's Lynn Minster, Greyfriars Tower, True's Yard, King's Lynn Museum and Green Quay.

Cllr Elizabeth Nockolds, Cabinet Member for Culture, Tourism and Marketing, said: "We are thrilled that the Heritage Lottery Fund has decided to support our exciting scheme. For eight centuries the town hall has been at the heart of King's Lynn's civic life; it contains a vast, and in some cases internationally significant, archive and fascinating collections. The Stories of Lynn attraction will help to bring this past to life, allowing local people to explore their heritage and attracting visitors to the town."

Norfolk County Councillor, Paul Smyth, Chairman of the county council's Communities Committee, said: "This exciting scheme will rejuvenate one of West Norfolk's most important heritage assets and we are delighted to have helped with the borough council's successful bid for funding. The Norfolk Museums Service and Norfolk Record Office will assist colleagues at the borough council to develop and deliver a comprehensive programme of activities that will transform public access to the town hall, its collections and archives. Hopefully, as people discover this important building and its historic contents they will be inspired to explore the other great heritage sites King's Lynn has to offer."

Working with Norfolk County Council, the Saturday Market Place will also be remodelled and together these projects provide an improved environment and backdrop to the St Margaret's THI scheme outlined above. The project will enhance the heritage of the area and improve the connections between the town hall, and town centre and historic waterfront. Norfolk County Council is contributing £60,000 towards this element of the scheme. This remodelling will involve widening the footpath in front of the town hall from the junction with St Margaret's Place to the junction with St James' Street, improving access to the building, and the market place will be resurfaced.

The one way system, which currently ends at the junction with Queen Street, will be extended to St James' Street, to help control traffic movement in the area, while cycle and car parking spaces (for 28 vehicles) will be incorporated in the scheme and appropriate lighting, street furniture and interpretation elements will be included.

Work on the Saturday Market Place will begin in August this year, with work to the town hall complex scheduled to begin in early 2015.

Notes to editors

About the Townscape Heritage programme – THIs encouraged partnerships of local organisations to carry out repairs and other works to a number of historic buildings, structures or spaces. On 25 March 2013 the programme was re-launched as Townscape Heritage with grants now available from £100,000 up to £2m. HLF supports partnerships of local, regional and national interests that aim to regenerate economically disadvantaged historic areas for the benefit of local residents, workers and visitors. To date, HLF has invested over £214m regenerating towns and cities that have suffered serious social and economic decline.

HLF funding to date in King's Lynn
Since 1994 the Heritage Lottery Fund has given £16m to King's Lynn. Projects include:

Restoration and preservation of key landmark buildings, open spaces, and museums:

- Grade I listed (1883) Custom House – houses the Tourist Information Centre - £178,700 HLF grant

- Grade I listed Geryfriars Tower - ££850,000 HLF grant
- Grade II listed Lynn Museum – conservation project - £778,500 HLF grant
- True’s Yard - £164,000 HLF grant
- The Walks – Grade II listed national historic park - £3.75m HLF grant
- Lynn Museum – refurbishment and community outreach programme - £778,500 HLF grant
- Grade I listed St Nicholas’ Chapel – conservation and repair works - £2.3m HLF grant
- Stories of Lynn – refurbishment of Guildhall and community archives project - £1.85million HLF grant
- St Margaret’s THI scheme – town centre regeneration grants - £1million HLF grant

Further information

Borough Council of King’s Lynn & West Norfolk: Leanne Winston, Communications Officer, on 01553 616 506.