Museum invites public to let off steam

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Hands on at Milestones is a project that aims to introduce new audiences to the delights of Hampshire's Living History Museum and encourage local people to offer their services as volunteers. Run by Hampshire Museums and Galleries Trust, the project includes two series of workshops, one looking at the museum's collection of steam engines, the other concentrating on historic countryside craft tools and implements.

In addition, local elderly residents will be interviewed about their memories of countryside living and employment in years gone by. A CD created from the recordings will be made available as a teaching aid to schoolchildren visiting the museum in future. Visitors will also be able to hear snatches of these reminiscences through a series of listening posts being installed throughout the museum which recreates a series of streets from the Victorian period through to the 1930s.

The museum's exhibition team will build five interactive models so those attending workshops can get a hands-on opportunity to explore the internal workings of steam engines. Once the workshop programme has been completed the models will become permanent additions to the museum's collection.

The project officially got underway at this year's OctoberFest 2010 and will end with a special celebration at the same event next year.

For the Heritage Lottery Fund, Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East England, said: "The Museum houses one of the largest collections of working steam engines in the country and an impressive array of craft tools. This project will give local people a chance literally to get to grips with these artefacts, and learn about their significance to the social and economic history of the county."

For Hampshire Museums and Galleries Trust, Ian Smith, Director of Development, said: "The project was launched at this year's OctoberFest to a crowd of over 5000 visitors, the sounds and smells of steam and wood attracting many requests from people to "have a go". Hands on at Milestones will enable people with no previous experience of working directly with heritage to get to grips, in every sense, with the raw materials that used to define the county in which we live."

Notes to editors

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 more than 33,900 projects, allocating over £4.4billion across the UK, with over £428 million granted in the South East alone.

Further information

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