Boost for National Glass Centre

24/01/2013

Following a successful fundraising campaign, one of the region's premier cultural attractions has announced an investment of £2.25million for an ambitious re-development programme which will begin this month and continue until Summer 2013.

The National Glass Centre in Sunderland has successfully attracted £750,000 from Arts Council England's Large Capital Programme, £337,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and £50,000 from the Foyle Foundation. This, coupled with the £975,000 investment from the University of Sunderland, illustrates a significant commitment to the development of the arts in the city.

The investment will contribute towards an ambitious re-development project, which will see major improvements to the centre's gallery and learning spaces. It will also contribute to the cost of the addition of new electric furnaces in the centre's integrated Hot Glass Studio, which will improve the centre's environmental sustainability and significantly reduce its carbon footprint.

The project will focus on a new heritage gallery within the centre that will be created alongside an extensive range of learning activities. The new exhibition spaces, which will showcase the origins of glass, the growth of the glass industry and the legacy of glass making in Sunderland, will help boost the centre's visitor numbers and enable more people to come in and enjoy this important heritage.

On 1 January 2013 the centre temporarily closed to the public in order to begin work on the re-development. The project is due for completion in Summer 2013 when the centre will re-open to the public with a high profile launch event.

Director of the National Glass Centre, James Bustard, said: "We are delighted that our partners at Arts Council England, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Foyle Foundation have recognised the great potential of the National Glass Centre and invested so significantly in its future. This investment will strengthen the centre's reputation as a centre for excellence and enable us to play a major role in the growing cultural landscape of the City of Sunderland and celebrate the city's rich glass-making heritage."

Professor Peter Fidler, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sunderland, said: "National Glass Centre is such an important cultural venue for Sunderland and the wider North East region. That is why we took over the running of the centre in 2010 and put forward a vision that would make it a venue with national significance.

"We have been supported with this vision by a range of people and organisations. From day one, the Arts Council backed our vision - firstly, funding the centre through the National Portfolio programme, and now with a £750,000 grant, for which we are extremely grateful.

"The Arts Council funding sits alongside a £337,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and a £50,000 donation from the Foyle Foundation, for which again, we are extremely grateful. Along with university funds, the new National Glass Centre is benefiting from £2.25m worth of investment. Investment that will indeed raise the profile of the centre regionally, and nationally."

Sunderland City Council's Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Wellness and Culture, Councillor John Kelly, said: "Our city is very proud of its cultural heritage and delighted at this investment into the National Glass Centre.

"We hope that the re-development of such an important venue will help attract even more people into Sunderland to learn more about our past and our ambitious plans for the future."

The bid has received strong support from the national arts community. Reino Liefkes, V&A's Head of Ceramics and Glass Collection, said: "I am delighted that the National Glass Centre's capital fundraising campaign has been successful. The re-modelled and expanded exhibition galleries and displays - together with significant investment in staffing and programme resource - will enable the centre to deliver an improved and ambitious programme of exhibitions.

This is an opportunity for the National Glass Centre to fulfil its potential and bring the work of internationally significant glass and ceramic artists to wider audiences, greatly enhancing the visual arts and design infrastructure in England. The V&A is looking forward to collaborating more closely with the National Glass Centre."

Ivor Crowther, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North East, said: "We at the Heritage Lottery Fund are delighted to be supporting this great project which will transform the National Glass Centre into a top visitor attraction. This relatively unknown part of Sunderland's heritage will be opened up to more people than ever - through an exciting range of events and activities – and will share the story of glassmaking with local people and visitors alike."

Notes to editors

During the re-development period, the National Glass Centre will be engaging in extensive outreach programmes with local schools and the community and will continue to hold a selection of adult courses, studio experiences and family activities on the Ground Floor Level.

The National Glass Centre Pop–up Shop will run at Sunderland City Library and Arts Centre, from 28 January (Wednesday – Friday, 9.30-5pm and Saturday, 9.30-4pm).

National Glass Centre will also be running a stand, featuring the work of five local artists at Collect International Arts Fair for Contemporary Objects at the Saatchi Gallery, London 10-13 May.

Further information

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