Heritage Lottery Fund puts £4.5million into transforming Scotland's National Portrait Gallery

30/03/2009

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) today announced a grant of £4,531,000 to transform the Scottish National Portrait Gallery (SNPG), the first purpose-built portrait gallery in the world, into an exciting new experience attracting even greater local, national and international visitors. HLF also announced a Stage One Pass* for the restoration of Abbotsford House in the Borders.

Housed within an architectural masterpiece which opened in 1889, the 'Portrait of the Nation' project will create a modern and dynamic gallery with contemporary interpretations, using new media and sensory experiences to engage the visitor. It will double the amount of gallery space, increase the number of items displayed by 350% and aims for a 50% increase in visitors.

The dramatic increase in gallery space will allow the SNPG to display many more of its 30,000 portraits and photographs depicting men and women whose lives and achievements helped shape Scotland and the wider world. There will also be a dedicated education suite, auditorium, IT gallery and research and learning centre to inspire school groups and adult learners.

Commenting from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Colin McLean, Head of HLF in Scotland, said: "New life will now be breathed into this beautiful historic building. Treasures that have been stored away for years will be brought out to showcase Scotland's history through the portraits of those who shaped it. The Heritage Lottery Fund is delighted to be able to support 'Portrait of a Nation' and in doing so, support Edinburgh as a leading European cultural destination. "

James Holloway, Director of the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, said: "We are delighted with the support from the HLF. Their confidence in the scheme is a terrific boost at this critical stage of the project. Portrait of the Nation will enable us to create an imaginative and bold portrait gallery suitable for Scotland in 21st century for the enjoyment of the Scottish people and visitors to Scotland."

The Scottish National Portrait Gallery will close on Sunday 5 April in order to start the refurbishment. That weekend the gallery will host The Farewell Festival, a weekend of celebratory events for visitors with a special emphasis on families and children. www.nationalgalleries.org

Abbotsford House

The Heritage Lottery Fund today also gave the green light to Abbotsford House to work up plans to restore this exceptional historic home of Sir Walter Scott. Development funding of £144,000 was awarded by HLF to help them work up these plans.

The HLF first-round pass* means that Abbotsford House can now progress to the second stage of the HLF application process. They have up to two years to submit more detailed plans and apply for the £4,448,000 of HLF support that they are seeking for their project.

Commenting on the decision, Colin McLean, said: "Sir Walter Scott was one of Scotland's greatest writers and arguably the most influential Scot that has ever lived. Abbotsford was his creation, the landscape, the architecture, the interiors

and they remain as he left it although now in serious need of repair. There is no question that this great heritage site needs to be saved. The hard work starts now as to how that is done and the Heritage Lottery Fund is pleased to be able to help by awarding development funding today."

Notes to editors

* A first-round pass means the project meets our criteria for funding and we believe it has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. However, a first-round pass does not guarantee the applicant will receive a grant as the second-round application will still be in competition for funding, and no money is set aside at this stage. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award. On occasion an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their scheme.

Further information

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