New exhibition in former hospital ward will celebrate history of medicine

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A new permanent exhibition, celebrating the history of medicine, is being created in a ward of the former Worcester Royal Infirmary, to be called Museum@WRI.

The British Medical Association (BMA) was founded by Sir Charles Hastings in the boardroom of the former hospital in 1832 and the site now forms the University of Worcester's City Campus.

The University is working with the George Marshall Medical Museum in the City to develop the new exhibition.

It will include collections of artefacts from the Infirmary and across Worcestershire, as well as exhibitions celebrating the history of the site. There will be an emphasis on education and participation, with activities to get schoolchildren and members of the public involved.

Anne Jenkins, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the West Midlands, said: "As one of the first cities outside London to found a voluntary hospital in the 18th century, Worcester has a rich historical legacy charting the development of healthcare provision over the past 300 years. This exciting new exhibition will enable people of all ages to take part in and learn about this extraordinary heritage."

Catriona Smellie, Curator at the George Marshall Medical Museum based at Worcestershire Royal Hospital, said: "This is a really exciting project that will allow us to display many of our collections for the first time. We have hundreds of rare books, going back to the 1600s, collections of medical equipment, and most interesting, in my opinion, are some of the artefacts found during the renovations of the site, such as old postcards and letters belonging to the nurses that lived and worked here."

Miss Smellie added: "The exhibition will include a lively interactive area, which will link the history of medicine to contemporary medical issues such as obesity and mental illness. The exhibition will also celebrate the history of the WRI in the Worcester community, and the stories of people who worked and were treated there during 300 years."

Anne Hannaford, Director of Information and Learning Services at the University of Worcester, added: "This is a fantastic opportunity to showcase the history of this site, where the British Medical Association was founded in 1832, and to engage the community in the history and future of medicine.

"It will enable curriculum development for schools and higher education, offer work placement and volunteering opportunities, and engage further community engagement and outreach."

Visitors to the exhibition, which is expected to open toward the end of this year, will be asked to share their memories and stories of the WRI and will be able to vote and give opinions on today's medical issues, such as stem cell research.

Designed by Bristol-based Simon Fenn, the exhibition will include ‘talking beds’ and examples of traditional Victorian wards.

The current George Marshall Medical Museum at the Worcestershire Royal Hospital will remain open, displaying further exhibitions of the City’s medical past.

Notes to editors

The HLF grant to the project Museum@WRI is for £537,000 (74% of project costs) and is a confirmed award.

The University of Worcester has the highest graduate employment rate for any University in the West Midlands and the 6th best in Britain.

The University has been growing in popularity faster than any other in the country with applications rising 10 times the national average in the past seven years.

In September 2010 the University opened its second campus at the former Worcester Royal Infirmary, creating state-of-the-art new teaching facilities and accommodation. The University has also purchased a prime site in the City where it will develop a state-of-the-art sports arena and teaching facilities over the next two years, and a 47 acre site at Grove Farm, Worcester, where it intends to build a Sport, Science and Business Park over the next 10 years.

The University of Worcester is involved in creating Europe’s first fully integrated public and university library. The new library and history centre is a partnership between the University and Worcestershire County Council and will open in 2012.

The University is home to the National Pollen and Aerobiology Research Unit, which provides the UK’s pollen forecasts and assists police with forensic cases.

To date, HLF have made 66 awards in Worcester amounting to just under £6million. Birmingham is a Priority Development Area within the West Midlands as HLF has historically received fewer applications from this area compared with others within the region.

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 30,000 projects, allocating over £4.5billion across the UK, including £319million to projects in the West Midlands alone.

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