Celebrating North East community heritage

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‘Celebrating Community Heritage’, a three year project, will focus on and celebrate the social, cultural, and industrial heritage of people in the North East.

The project, run by Beamish Museum, will involve people from across the region in unique and inspiring activities which will reconnect communities with their history. Schools, community organisations and individuals will get involved in activities taking place within the community and at the Museum.

Beamish Museum, an open air museum in County Durham, tells the story of the people of North East England through immersion in the sights and sounds of the past. Costumed staff are on hand to engage visitors with the original buildings and historic objects in the Museum, many of which have been brought from communities across the region and rebuilt at Beamish.

Ivor Crowther, Head of the HLF in the North East, said: “The North East is packed full of fascinating heritage, both social and industrial, and this impressive project will open that up to more people than ever before. We know the activities involved with this project will provide people with a special chance to get involved with their heritage and gain real tangible benefits in terms of education, training, and volunteering opportunities.”

Richard Evans, Director at Beamish, said: “The 'Celebrating Community Heritage' project is a fantastic opportunity to get local people involved in hands-on learning about themselves and their history and heritage. Beamish will be working with communities to explore their past and will be encouraging everybody to get to take part. The project is a real opportunity to come together to learn from each other and celebrate the unique role their community has played in shaping the remarkable history of the North East.”

People will have the chance to decide what heritage themes they want to focus on. Themes already suggested range from lead mining in Weardale and evacuees in Sunderland to early railway transport in Darlington and post-war experiences in Gateshead.

Once the areas of research have been decided, participants will take part in a wide range of interactive activities enabling them to really get involved with and learn about the different parts of their heritage. Activities will include archival research, photographic exhibitions and heritage trails as well as hands on learning at the Museum.

This innovative project will work with 12 communities across the North East including schools, community groups and over 300 volunteers.

'Celebrating Community Heritage' will not be the only project happening at the Museum. A range of different projects are taking place over the next few years to encourage access to the wonderful collections cared for at the Museum.

One of these projects, the 'People's Collection', will improve access to the Museum’s collections by developing online access to them. Through the ‘People’s Collection’ images and information about the Museum’s collections will be made freely available, including access to the extensive photo archive. People visiting the site can add their own information

to the website to contribute to an ever changing record of the North East. The museum is also developing 'Open Stores' in 2011, based at the Regional Resource Centre, and encouraging access to collections that are not currently on display.

Notes to editors

• Beamish Museum is an award-winning museum, set in 300 acres of County Durham countryside. It was established in 1970 as ‘an Open Air Museum for the purpose of studying, collecting, preserving and exhibiting buildings, machinery, objects and information illustrating the development of industry and way of life in the North of England’. The museum attracts some 420,000 visitors each year from throughout the UK and overseas.

Further information

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