Pitt Rivers Museum wins Heritage Lottery Fund support of over £1million

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A £1.6million project in total, VERVE will fund vital conservation, sensitive refreshment of displays and much-improved case lighting, alongside a wide-ranging programme of public activities illuminating the ways in which human creativity has driven developments in techniques and technologies. Workshops, special events, educational activities and opportunities for community and volunteer participation will form a major part of the project which aims to explore the importance of design and craft skills through a deeper understanding of the artefacts on display, incorporating expert commentary from contemporary craftmakers. In order to keep the museum open throughout, the project will be staged over five years.

The museum has already secured substantial additional support for VERVE from a range of generous funders, including DCMS / Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund, the Foyle Foundation, and the museum’s friends organisation, as well as Oxford University itself. Michael O'Hanlon, the museum's director, said: "We are absolutely delighted with HLF’s endorsement. Now we can begin to recruit staff, and the project will gain momentum in 2013 with a series of fresh and exciting initiatives which respond to visitor demand. In the meantime we are actively seeking the remaining £300,000 required in partnership funding."

One of several new, local partners who will link with the project is Rycotewood Furniture Centre, Oxford and Cherwell Valley College. Chris Hyde, Head of its National School of Furniture said: "The Museum's displays have enormous potential as a source of inspiration for our students, so we are thrilled that the Heritage Lottery Fund is supporting this project which recognises the educational importance of craft skills and technologies. It will enable us to build a lasting relationship with the Museum".

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East, said: "This fantastic project will really bring the museum's collections to life for everyone to explore. HLF is dedicated to supporting projects like VERVE, that open up our fascinating heritage for local people and visitors to learn about and enjoy. By redisplaying 1,800 objects, conserving existing collections and introducing an exciting range of events and activities, the Pitt Rivers museum will continue to be a great addition to Oxford's tourist offering".

Notes to editors

The VERVE project will begin in November 2012 and run for five years. The Pitt Rivers Museum will remain open throughout 2013 when its sister museum, the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, will be closed for roof repairs.

The Pitt Rivers Museum is one of Oxford’s most popular attractions, famous for its period atmosphere and outstanding collections from many cultures around the world, past and present. Admission, exhibitions and events are free.

The Pitt Rivers Museum was founded in 1884 when General Pitt Rivers, an influential figure in the development of archaeology and evolutionary anthropology, gave his personal collection of 20,000 items to the University on condition that a museum was built to house the material, and that a post was created to lecture in anthropology. Today the

collection numbers some 600,000 items, and the Museum remains an active department of Oxford University doing and supporting research and teaching in archaeology and anthropology.

VERVE represents the third phase of the museum's redevelopment, following the opening of its new extension in 2007 and the redevelopment of its entrance in 2009. In 2011-12, the Museum welcomed over 376,000 visitors.

Redisplay will be carried out in identified cases currently screened off or requiring urgent remedial conservation due to their age. Such new displays will be carried out in a sensitive way in keeping with the historical style of the galleries for which the Museum is so well known.

Further information

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Interviews with key staff and images of the Museum and objects are available on request.