

Pontefract Castle wins Heritage Lottery Fund support

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The HLF has endorsed the Council's proposal by granting a first-round pass that includes development funding of £65,157 to help support the scheme progress to the second round application for £3million, which will be submitted next year.

Cllr Peter Box CBE, Leader of Wakefield Council, said: "Pontefract Castle is an important part of the district's rich cultural heritage and this support from the Heritage Lottery Fund is a positive step towards the conservation and improvement to the area. The Key to the North project will improve the visitor experience to the historic site, boost tourism to the Castle and the district, raise the profile of Pontefract and create local jobs.

The preservation of Pontefract Castle is a key priority and I am in full support of this well deserved project gaining success in the next stage."

Fiona Spiers, Head of HLF Yorkshire and the Humber, said: "Pontefract Castle is a fantastic heritage asset and is much-loved and widely used by the local community. This initial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund means ambitious and exciting plans to restore the castle and share its history with everyone can now take a step forward. Once complete, this project will add to wider regeneration schemes in the area including the recent HLF funded Pontefract Townscape Heritage Initiative."

Yvette Cooper MP said: "The Heritage Lottery Fund has taken an important step. Pontefract Castle is a fantastic part of our national as well as local history so we really want more people to be able come and enjoy the Castle. That would be a real boost to the town and Wakefield Council has been working really hard to win this new investment. Everyone will be keeping up the work to get it to the final stage.

The Key to the North project aims to conserve the standing remains of the Castle, landscape the area, develop new visitor facilities, create new access paths and viewing platforms around the site and help inform people of the site's significant regional and national history with activities, demonstrations and conservation open days.

If successful in the next stage, the £3.6million project will be part funded by English Heritage and the Council. The five-year project will then start in 2014 with conservation of the standing remains and the creation of the new visitor facilities.

This will be carried out in conjunction with the necessary consolidation of the remaining stonework bringing it to a safe and sustainable condition. The Arts and Crafts building will be refurbished and extended to provide a visitor centre and shop, flexible use space for learning, accessible toilets, storage and café.

The setting of Wakefield Council's Diamond Jubilee celebrations and beacon lighting on 3 June, Pontefract Castle dates back to the 11th century.

Edward I called Pontefract 'The Key to the North' and Richard II was imprisoned and later murdered in the castle, inspiring Shakespeare to immortalize the castle as a "bloody prison, fatal and ominous to noble peers".

During the Wars of the Roses (1454-85) Pontefract Castle was used as a Lancastrian stronghold, in the 16th century Henry VIII's fifth wife, Catherine Howard was reportedly found with her lover in the Castle's Royal Apartments, and during the English Civil Wars (1642-1651) the Royalist castle underwent three Parliamentary sieges before being demolished on the request of the townspeople of Pontefract in 1649.

Pontefract Castle is open to visitors free of charge, throughout the year.

Further information

Visit the [Wakefield Council website](#).