Local residents get ready to play their part in future of Pontypridd Museum

01/10/2010

The museum, which tells the story of the town and its people, houses a significant collection of local and regional artefacts from sport to industry to culture, including memories of two of its famous local sons, Sir Geraint Evans and Sir Tom Jones. It is also home to ten local community groups who showcase their work at the museum.

Built as Tabernacle Welsh-language Baptist chapel in 1861, the chapel was last used for worship in 1982, and reopened as a historical and cultural centre in 1986.

The lottery funding will be used to carry out urgent repair work to the roof of the museum, bringing the museum's ceiling back to its original 1910 condition. An integral part of the project will be to use the conservation work to increase opportunities for people to learn about their local architectural heritage through skills workshops, open days and guided tours.

Pontypridd Town Council hopes that with this injection of money from HLF, more people will take part in the museum's activities and groups. Brian Davies, Pontypridd Museum, said: "This grant will secure the future of the museum, and enable some of the regular users of the building to take part in the fascinating work of conservation themselves."

Volunteers from Pontypridd and District Art Society and the Cilfynydd Art Society alongside Cardiff University conservation students will research and prepare the ceiling's colour scheme as well as create moulds of the ceiling for school children to use in lessons. This will from part of an education programme to integrate new material about Tabernacle into local history lessons in local primary schools.

Anita Raymond, from Treforest, has been a member of the Pontypridd Arts Society for 35 years, she commented: "We're really excited about playing our part in helping this project happen, from getting school children involved to creating the final colour palette for the painters. It's so important to keep the area alive with the arts and encourage young people to get involved in different aspects. Pontypridd Museum is a central part of the town and should be celebrated."

Robert James, Head of Coed-y-Lan Primary School, Pontypridd, said: "Pontypridd Museum is invaluable to our school, we make regular visits and always use it for our history exhibitions. The fabric of the building is of particular value for the children's learning and fits into our curriculum. So many old buildings have been lost, it's really important that this wonderful Tabernacle stays in our community and its heritage is shared with as many people as possible."

The Old Bridge Photographic Society will be recording the repair project from beginning to end. Their images will feature in an exhibition and publication created by members of the community to showcase the history of the building. The exhibition will not only inform the 30,000 visitors the museum attracts annually but will also go on tour to other museums. In addition, teaching materials will be made available online, including photographs and original records.

Bob Wakefield, Chair of The Old Bridge Photographic Society, said: "We've been based in the museum for the last 14 years and it's great to be able to give something back through capturing every element of this project on film. The museum is extremely well used and we hope this will show the high level of activity that takes place here and get more

people through the doors."

Owen Smith, MP for Pontypridd, commented: "This is another great piece of news for Pontypridd. The chapel is one of Ponty's iconic buildings and the Museum it houses is a fantastic record of the history of our town and our community. Brian Davies and others have done a great job of building and showcasing a collection that should be the envy of other towns across Wales and it is only right that the building is fully restored, and its rich content brought to an even wider audience."

Dan Clayton Jones, Chair of HLF Committee for Wales, said: "Pontypridd Museum is a focal point for the town and provides a fantastic insight into what has made Pontypridd what it is today. The building itself is steeped in history and this project is a brilliant opportunity for local people to get involved, learn new skills and in doing so play a part in taking their local heritage forward. The skills learnt will help maintain the museum in the future and ensure the architectural importance of Tabernacle is shared."

You can also keep up to date with Heritage Lottery Fund Wales on their Facebook page.

Note to editors

• More than £86.3m has been awarded to over 1,484 projects in Wales that involve volunteers. More than 98% of grants awarded in the last year have created volunteering opportunities.
• Volunteering is a cornerstone of HLF projects. Our research indicates that, on average, 13 volunteers are involved in every project, providing nearly 450 hours of volunteering time per project – that's a total of 667,800 volunteering hours across Wales!
• HLF has awarded £49.3m to 179 projects in Wales that have included delivery of taught programmes for learners of all ages.
• Over 60 projects in Wales have offered participants the chance to learn new skills such as blacksmithing, textile and paper conservation, traditional building skills and dry stone walling.
• 64 new work-based training opportunities have been created in Wales through our Training Bursary programme which aims to address specific skills shortages in the heritage sector.

Further information

Kate Sullivan or Helen Newton at Equinox on 02920 764100 or hlf@equinox-pr.co.uk