Preston, Oxford and Torbay benefit from £7.4m Heritage Lottery Fund investment

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Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said: “These inspirational and important projects showcase our heritage at its very best, each providing their local communities and visitors with a special look into the past. Heritage Lottery Fund money continues to revitalise and transform historic sites like these into sustainable places for the future, offering a wide range of training and volunteering opportunities and reinforcing their appeal as tourist attractions.”

John Penrose, Minister for Tourism and Heritage, said: “This is fantastic news not only for the heritage projects themselves but also for the wider community as a whole who will also benefit from this investment.The range of projects, in all corners of the country, highlights the wonderful variety of cultural heritage which is supported by HLF funding”.

The best for Preston - Harris Museum & Art Gallery – confirmed grant of £1.18 m
One of the North West’s most important museums, the Harris Museum & Art Gallery is a Grade 1 listed building housing substantial collections of fine and decorative art alongside artefacts relating to Preston’s industrial and social history. Prized pieces include the ‘Poulton Elk’, a 10,000-year-old elk skeleton whose bones show evidence of humans’ first presence in the area, and a significant photography collection of images of Preston from 1850 onwards.

The project will create a new ‘Guild Gallery’ filled with historical objects which demonstrate the national and international importance of Preston’s history, opening to coincide with the 2012 Preston Guild celebrations. HLF’s grant will go towards expanding and refurbishing the existing history gallery and architecture, and widening the learning programme to provide new opportunities for people to engage with their heritage as visitors and volunteers.

Towering Ambition -The University Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford – confirmed grant of £3.4m
The University Church of St Mary the Virgin sits within Oxford’s Conservation Area and attracts 300,000 visitors every year. As the University Church, it was used for meetings of the University ruling body during the 13th century and housed its first ever library, the forerunner to the Bodleian. The church’s most notable feature, its spire, is the tallest in the city and offers wonderful panoramic views.

HLF’s investment will help repair the church’s façade, including the stonework, spire and tower, as well as enabling vital repairs to the interior. The history of the church will be displayed and learning and volunteering programmes will be created with up to 200 local people being offered the chance to train as guides. The Old Library will also be restored, enhancing its facilities and making it more accessible as a space for educational activities.

Happy day for Abbey - Torre Abbey, Torbay – confirmed grant of £2.8m
Dating back 800 years, Torre Abbey is one of the best preserved medieval monasteries in Devon and Cornwall. The site is home to the famous ‘Spanish Barn’ – a medieval tithe barn originally built to store taxes paid to the Abbey in the form of grain and hay. The Abbey, also a museum and art gallery, houses an impressive art collection including pieces by William Blake and Edward Burne-Jones.

HLF’s grant will enable the second phase of the Abbey’s restoration project to begin with extensive conservation of the

medieval ruins, cloister wall and other key parts of the building being undertaken. New learning spaces will be created, including transforming the Abbey's top floor into a gallery based around its long history. Working with the local Friends Group, volunteers will be recruited and trained to lead guided tours.

Notes to editors

* A confirmed award means that money had already been earmarked by HLF for the project in question and that the full amount has now been secured.

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 £4.5billion across the UK.

Further information

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