Realising the dream at Colne Valley Museum

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The plan is to restore and refurbish a 19th-century weaver's cottage and incorporate it into the current museum buildings, which are housed in the remaining three cottages of the row.

A development grant has been awarded to help the museum progress their plans to apply for a full grant of more than £680,000 at a later date.

The museum provides an unrivalled record of domestic scale textile production in the West Riding during the 19th century. The project aims to carry out essential conservation work and re-shape the layout of the Grade II listed building to enable easier access to the three-storied cottages. A document and photographic collection will be digitised to enable greater public access, and the creation of a period bedroom in the end cottage will result in a complete weaver's cottage, which will become a focal point for visitors. Expansion of the educational programme is also planned, as well as outreach work within the local community, which will include a local heritage resource area, providing facilities for the general public to pursue their own research into the valley's past.

This row of four weavers' cottages, originally known as "Spring Rock", was built in 1845 by the Pearson family, and is believed to be among the last to be built for the purposes of handloom weaving, for which this valley was once famous.

Janet Jobber, a trustee of the museum, said "We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us this support. Our museum holds a special place in the local community – the community which created it over 43 years ago – and we are looking forward to 'Realising' and 'Sustaining' our dream of having the whole row back under one ownership and creating an even better way to celebrate and preserve our wonderful local heritage."

Explaining the importance of the HLF support, Fiona Spiers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Yorkshire and the Humber, said: "The museum provides a great insight into the heritage of the local area. We look forward to receiving its detailed plans to make its fascinating collection available for more people to learn about the traditional domestic and textile skills of the past."

Notes to editors

A first-round pass means the project meets HLF criteria for funding and HLF believes the project has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.

On occasion, an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded funding towards the development of their scheme.

Colne Valley Museum was begun 43 years ago by the people in the valley who did not want to see all traces of the handloom weavers' industry disappear in the slum clearances of the 1960s. Their vision – well ahead of its time – was a 'hand's-on' museum, where visitors could see working demonstrations of the traditional skills of the 19th century, ensuring these important skills would be preserved, as well as the building and its artefacts.

It is a registered charity, run entirely by its volunteer members. For further details visit the Colne Valley Museum website .

Further information

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