Support from HLF for The Patrick Geddes Centre for Learning and Conservation at Riddle’s Court

27/10/2011

Riddle’s Court, in Edinburgh’s Royal Mile, in The Patrick Geddes Centre for Learning and Conservation, has received a first round pass from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). This indicates their initial support of £2.4million towards the project.

Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland, commented today: “This project will totally rejuvenate this fine, medieval building, uncovering its historic features and its fascinating social history. We are delighted to give it our support at this stage.”

This support from the Heritage Lottery Fund marks a major funding milestone for the project and announces the start of a two-year development phase, including a fundraising campaign for the project before it starts on site in 2013. Development funding has also been awarded which will enable SHBT to develop their plans to apply for a full grant in 2013.

Commenting on the announcement, SHBT Director Una Richards, said: “We are delighted to receive the support from the Heritage Lottery Fund which means that it is full steam ahead for the fundraising campaign and development for this fabulous project in the heart of Edinburgh.”

Riddle’s Court is a former merchant’s house, one of the earliest surviving courtyard houses in Edinburgh’s Old Town and a highly significant A-listed property. It has architectural features from all phases of its 400-year history including a 16th century painted tempera ceiling, 17th century plaster ceilings and fireplaces, a heraldic ceiling from the 19th century and architectural interventions from the 1960s.

It has historic associations with a wealthy Baillie, various noble and aristocratic gentlemen in the 17th and 18th century including leaders in the Scottish Enlightenment. In the 19th century it was transformed by Patrick Geddes into a University Hall as part of his plans to regenerate the Old Town and his educational and social reforms.

The property has been owned by the City of Edinburgh Council since the mid-20th century, and they have given their unqualified support to the project by leasing the buildingto SHBT to progress the project and supporting the projects learning objectives.

Commenting on the round one success of the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund Cllr Maclaren said: "After a great deal of preparatory work with the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust over the last few years, I am thrilled that they have been awarded funding from Heritage Lottery which will allow them to embark on the exciting project to renovate one of the hidden gems in Edinburgh's historic and architectural heritage.

"I have always been determined to save this fantastic building and to endeavour to turn it into a vibrant learning centre, drawing on themes, promoted more than a century ago by Patrick Geddes. I also want to see it opened to the public so that they are able to appreciate some of the wonderful internal features dating back centuries and am confident that this

initial award can lead on to the funding which will bring this dream to reality."

Although still partially in educational use today, Riddle's Court is in serious decline, rarely open to the public and a Building at Risk. The project will cost £5.8million which will fund the repair, conservation and enhancement of Riddle's Court to secure its future, improve access and its condition.

The Patrick Geddes Centre will be open to the public and provide an extensive educational programme based on the approach to learning based on 'life skills' evolved from Patrick Geddes and a hub for built environment organisations within the centre of the World Heritage Site of Edinburgh.

On the ground floor directly accessible from the open courtyard will be exhibition space to interpret the historic development of Riddle's Court, the influence of Patrick Geddes in the Old Town, to town planning, the environment, education and the international community.

Office space for SHBT, WEA and other learning and conservation organisations will be provided on the upper levels to deliver the learning and conservation activities.

Notes to editors

About Scottish Historic Buildings Trust
Scottish Historic Buildings Trust is a charity that secures the future of under-used historic buildings across Scotland by expertly restoring them for the nation and finding new uses that can regenerate local communities and the historic environment.

Scottish Historic Buildings Trust previously operated as three individual trusts working within the Alba Conservation Group of trusts comprising Alba Conservation Trust, Cockburn Conservation Trust and Scottish Historic Buildings Trust.

The three trusts merged in 2010 combining over 30 years experience in building conservation for the regeneration of Scottish communities. Scottish Historic Buildings Trust is a not for profit Building Preservation Trust and does not receive any core funding for its work.

About Patrick Geddes
Patrick Geddes was born in Ballatter and trained as a biologist, but became known globally as a founding father for modern town planning, first with his pioneering work in regenerating Edinburgh's Old Town in the late 19th century and later India and elsewhere, he has also inspired holistic approaches to learning and philosophy through his innovative thinking and the concept of the development of life skills.

Further information

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