Sharing Heritage - new money to uncover the rich stories of our past

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Sharing Heritage is a new funding programme to help people across the UK explore, conserve and share all aspects of the history and character of their local area. With a commitment from HLF of £3m each year, grants between £3,000 and £10,000 will now be available to groups who want to discover their local heritage.

This new programme follows the unprecedented success of last year's one-off HLF grant scheme – All Our Stories, which ran in tandem with BBC Two's The Great British Story: A People's History, presented by historian, Michael Wood. The scheme was four times oversubscribed and convinced HLF of people's appetite to get involved.

Helping to launch Sharing Heritage, at the People's History Museum in Manchester, projects from Northumberland joined others from across the North of England to share their stories with community groups attending today's event, hoping to apply for funding under the new scheme.

From a fascinating timeline film showcasing Bedlington's relationship with the Industrial Revolution, the coal-mining industry and the world-famous Bedlington Terrier, to an archaeological project currently focusing on the excavation of a 13th-century fulling mill, recently revealed in the Coquet riverbed at Windyhaugh near Rothbury, the North East projects are all working with communities and young people to explore significant community heritage themes and how these have impacted and shaped the area in which they live.

Michael Wood, HLF's champion for Sharing Heritage and speaking today at the launch, said: "We have already seen just how much people want to be able to delve into their local history and what those fascinating explorations can reveal. Community projects from last year are now underway ranging from a timeline film on Bedlington's rich heritage, to looking at the lost pubs of Salford that were once at the very heart and soul of the town. I can't wait to hear about the surprising stories that will come out of this new scheme. It's the people who own history and this is a great opportunity to share that history with others and future generations."

Ivor Crowther, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North East, added: "This new scheme will bring the giant jigsaw of our islands' local stories together to create an unprecedented picture of our past. In the North East, as elsewhere in the UK, heritage means such different things to different people, and this investment will offer a wealth of opportunities for groups to explore and celebrate what's important to them in their local area. We are looking forward to receiving an exciting variety of applications under this new programme, reflecting the breadth of heritage across the region."

Malcolm Robinson, chairman of the Bedlington Development Trust commented: "It's about far more than nostalgia, Bedlington has no leisure facilities or heritage centre, so the project is the ideal opportunity to provide content and create a sense of civic pride."

Projects are expected to cover a wide spectrum of subject matter but could include exploring local archaeology, a community's cultures and traditions, identifying and recording local wildlife and protecting the surrounding environment, collecting and digitising old photos, producing local history publications, conserving sites or items of local significance, managing and training volunteers, and holding festivals and events to commemorate the past.

Notes to editors

Sharing Heritage is for any not-for-profit group wanting to explore their community's heritage.

All Our Stories was developed in response to HLF's Strategic Framework consultation with both the public and heritage sector. Based on this, HLF has made applying for funding simpler and easier for first-time applicants and community groups. Last year All Our Stories grants were promoted through five BBC Learning events at flagship heritage locations and regional events across the UK which ran in tandem with BBC Two's 'The Great British Story: A People's History' series which inspired people to get involved with their local heritage. These events provided opportunities for people to discover their place in history and uncover the history of their local area and encouraged applications to HLF. The All Our Stories programme was four times oversubscribed with a total investment from HLF of £4.5m. Over 500 successful projects were announced in November 2012 and are currently underway.

Sharing Heritage is being launched at The People's History Museum in Manchester on Tuesday 19 February by Michael Wood, who will be accompanied by a range of HLF-funded community heritage projects. The North East projects taking part are:

- Bedlington Our Heritage: The Northumberland town of Bedlington has a rich heritage and illustrious but often forgotten history. This is set to change with a new a new timeline film to be made by first-time HLF applicant Bedlingtonshire Development Trust. Bedlington Our Heritage will look at the town's cultural and historic links with the 11th-century St Cuthbert, the Industrial Revolution, the coal-mining industry and the world-famous Bedlington Terrier. The interactive project will research all the recorded local history and schoolchildren and local people will re-enact key events in Bedlington's history. These will include the miners' picnic, filmed for the BBC by Ken Russell in 1960. A mobile exhibition will be created from these re-enactments for local schools and old people's homes

- Slymefoot – Investigation of an Abandoned Landscape: Coquetdale Community Archaeology, a community archaeology group dedicated to investigating and promoting the archaeological heritage of Upper Coquetdale in Northumberland will lead this project.

  The project will enhance the understanding of the use and development of an abandoned medieval landscape along the River Coquet, north of Rothbury. The project is currently focusing on the archaeological excavation of a 13th-century fulling mill, recently revealed in the riverbed at Windyhaugh near Rothbury, and thought to have been the property of the monks of Newminster Abbey.

  Volunteers have excavated the sites alongside professionals and explored, recorded and interpreted the surrounding abandoned landscape and settlement features to gain a greater understanding of the use and development of the area. Two seasons of work have already been completed and a third season is taking place this year. Experiences and discoveries are being shared with wider audiences including local schools, university students, community groups and the wider archaeological community through complimentary activities such as talks, walks, publications and interpretation. There is also a display in the nearby cafe at Barrowburn.

  Christine Butterworth, Chair Coquetdale Community Archaeology, said: "The discovery of a site known only from ecclesiastical records has been very exciting for us. The fulling mill is an early example of a low breastshot mill which was only in use for a short period. The Border Wars from 1296 led to the site's abandonment and partial survival without later additions. We all learnt a great deal of techniques from the professionals and had a lot of fun

working on the project. It was particularly enjoyable to show and explain to our many visitors the site and its features."

Further information

HLF Press Office: James Steward or Katie Owen on 020 7591 6056 / 6036, mobile: 07973 613 820 for images, further project examples and community heritage grantee interviews.