Glasshouse to realise vision for the future with HLF grant

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The money will restore the Lower Glasshouse, a key part of the Glasshouse site - an old crystal glass making factory with a continuous history of glasswork dating back to 1691 – and bring it back into use as a multi-purpose arts, heritage, exhibition and education centre.

The Glasshouse, which houses the Glasshouse College, the Ruskin Glass Centre and the Glasshouse Arts Centre, has significant historic and cultural value to Stourbridge and the West Midlands. Ruskin Mill Educational Trust (RMET) - a charity well known for pioneering education and training for young people with complex behaviour and learning difficulties and disabilities – bought the site in 2000 from Royal Doulton. They are overseeing the conservation of this important and complex industrial site and will now be able to realise their vision for the Glasshouse as a ‘world class centre for innovation, enterprise, creativity and learning in the West Midlands.’

Key elements of the HLF funded scheme include restoration of the Lower Glasshouse and plans to make it more accessible to all, while the wider project will regenerate the site, transforming it into a landmark destination with proposed visitor numbers expected to double from 13,000 to 25,000 a year by 2015, and improved facilities and opportunities for Glasshouse College students, local glassmakers and the local economy

Anne Jenkins, Head of HLF in the West Midlands, said: “We are delighted to be able to confirm the grant for this long awaited and eagerly supported project. We wish RMET every success with the restoration of the Glasshouse and creation of this superb new education facility.”

RMET has a well established track record in transforming brownfield sites into centres for education and cultural excellence. The project, which will build on The Glasshouse’s growing reputation as a major UK centre for both glassmaking and training will include:refurbishment of poor quality factory buildings improved performance, exhibition and display areas for glass works expanded education facilities and refurbished glass studios, new interactive interpretation, heritage trails and use of film to bring the heritage of the site alive for visitors,training opportunities for volunteers and a continuing programme of events, education and community outreach.

Ollie Cheney, Principal of Glasshouse College, said: “This is a very exciting development for the Glasshouse College. As well as expanding our education facilities it will give our students great opportunities to work with the local community, celebrating and preserving the glass quarter’s heritage.”

Ian Clements, Director of the Glasshouse Development Project, said: "The HLF award is a key element in RMET’s plan to upgrade, refurbish and regenerate this historically important site. Without HLF’s support, it’s hard to see how this would have been possible.”

Margot James, MP for Stourbridge, offered her support for the project: “This is fantastic news for the town and its visitors. At the centre of the Stourbridge Glass Quarter the Glasshouse is an extremely important building to the heritage of the area. We once shipped glass all over the world from here, and this grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund will ensure that legacy is preserved while bringing excellent educational benefits to our community.”

Stourbridge is home to some of the last traditional glassmaking sites in the region and in the country. The Glasshouse also enjoys a growing reputation for the International Festival of Glass, a biennial event attracting over 8000 visitors and the largest of its kind promoting glassmaking in Europe.

Notes to editors

The HLF grant to the project The Glasshouse Development is for £1,850,000 (51.2% of project costs) and is a confirmed award.

The Glasshouse houses the Glasshouse College, the Ruskin Glass Centre and the Glasshouse Arts Centre. It's one of three sites owned by RMET; the others are in Gloucestershire (rural crafts) and Sheffield (metal trades).
All work out of a sense of place, providing education based on the skills of the area. Courses are full time for three years, students are aged 16 – 25 and come from all over the country. www.rmet.org.uk.

Glasshouse College was founded in September 2000 as a new educational centre within Ruskin Mill Educational Trust teaching glassmaking skills to young people with learning and behavioural difficulties within a therapeutic craft curriculum. This innovative and experiential learning programme is being developed out of the inspiration of Rudolf Steiner, William Morris and John Ruskin and can lead to GCSE, NVQ or equivalent vocational qualifications.

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 33,900 projects, allocating over £4.4billion across the UK, including £319million to projects in the West Midlands alone.

Further information

Vicky Wilford HLF Press Office on 020 7591 6046 / 07973 401 937 or vickyw@hlf.org.uk

Ian Clements, The Glasshouse College & Ruskin Mill Education Trust Executive Services Manager on 01453 837 604 / 07977 174 733 or ian.clements@rmet.org.uk