£2.5million for Dorset's Tank Museum

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The multi-faceted project includes a new 40,000 sq ft Vehicle Conservation Centre (VCC) and two major exhibitions which will all be delivered in stages between 2013 and 2015.

Tank Museum Director Richard Smith said: “This is a pivotal moment in the history of The Tank Museum. The support of the Heritage Lottery Fund will ensure that we can continue to thrive, so we are naturally delighted and extremely grateful.”

The VCC will be publicly accessible and capable of holding 120 vehicles. For the first time ever, The Tank Museum will have the space to ensure that every vehicle in its collection can be stored undercover in conditions suitable for their long-term conservation.

“This means that the museum can continue to collect historically significant armoured fighting vehicles and retain its status as the best collection of its kind in the world,” said Richard. “We will also have the facilities to enable on-going volunteer-led conservation projects and allow us to re-launch our award-winning engineering training programme for groups of young offenders.”

Work on the VCC is expected to commence in September and should be complete before July 2013 at which point the second phase of the Access All Areas project will begin.

“With more space we will be able to put our plans for a rolling programme of new exhibitions into action.” Richard explained.

Richard Bellamy, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South West, said: “We are delighted to be supporting this fantastic project which will totally transform the way visitors interact with the Tank Museum’s impressive collection. The VCC will provide vastly improved space for some of the museum’s most ‘at risk’ vehicles and allow the public and volunteers to witness the conservation progress in action. This is a great opportunity for everyone to get involved and learn about these complex machines and their role in history over the years.”

To mark the centenary of the First World War in 2014, War Horse to Horse Power will be the first of two major new exhibitions at the Museum. With the Museum’s Mark IV replica as a centrepiece, the role of the horse and cavalryman will be contrasted with the emergent tank and its crew as the mechanisation of the British Army is examined within the context of the conflict that saw the birth of the tank.

Following this, the Museum will broaden its narrative even further with an exhibition titled Making Tanks which is set for completion in 2015. Making Tanks will tell the story of people who made tanks and the challenges they overcame in an industry where good design and production can be a matter of life and death.

“Both these exhibitions seek to improve the way The Tank Museum tells this broad and complex story, and will add a great deal to the visitors experience and comprehension of our subject matter,” Richard added.

The grant follows the success of a major HLF funded redevelopment of The Tank Museum which was completed in 2009.

Further information

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