Time for change

13/09/2011

A local landmark in Randalstown was awarded a £30,200 Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant, it was announced today. The grant was recieved by Neillsbrook Community Development Group and will support the restoration of the Webb Clock Tower and the interpretation of the social history behind this iconic structure.

Built in 1952, the Webb Clock Tower was erected on behalf of employees of the Old Bleach Linen Company as a memorial to William Hubert Webb, a leading figure at the firm for 40 years. At its peak the Company employed 1,000 people and the Clock Tower remains a symbol of the area's historic links to the linen industry.

For more than half a century the clock tower has been a focal point for the residents of Neillsbrook, as an important meeting place for the local community and centre for recreational activities. The 'Time for Change' project will restore the fabric of the tower and reinstate the clock's feature and three faces. Antrim Borough Council, which fully supports this restoration project, will manage the conservation works and maintain the tower following its conservation.

The social heritage which lies behind the tower will be researched by Randalstown Historical Society. Old photographs and archive material which show the relationship between the clock tower, the Webb family and the Old Bleach Linen Company will be made available for use in displays and an interpretation panel, which will be used at the clock tower to highlight its built heritage importance. Leaflets will also be produced and distributed at local tourist information outlets and school visits to the tower will be arranged to raise awareness of the heritage of the clock tower and the value of the building to the wider community.

Announcing the award, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, said: "We are delighted to be involved in this project which is of great importance to the local community. The restoration of the clock tower and the associated activities to open up its social heritage will enable people to learn more about their history, re-instilling a sense of community pride in both this local landmark and the heritage behind it."

Brian Johnston, Chair of Neillsbrook Community Development Group, added: "We are thankful to HLF and Antrim Borough Council for their support for this project which will see this historic clock tower brought back into use. It is wonderful that local people and in particular the younger generation of Neillsbrook will be able to learn more about the history of the tower and the wider industrial heritage of the area through this project, which has been driven forward by and means so much to the local community."

Neillsbrook Community Development Group would also like to thank Ulster Garden Villages for their generous support.