Town centres win £14m Heritage Lottery regeneration boost

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This investment is part of the HLF's Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) which has invested nearly £200m since 1998 into regenerating towns that have suffered serious social and economic decline.

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of the HLF, said: "The Heritage Lottery Fund is proud to be playing a key role in helping to revitalise these once thriving towns. The benefits are far reaching. This investment will help support local authorities and residents to transform their towns, making essential improvements and repairs that will encourage local businesses and visitors back into these historically vibrant areas."

Wayne Hemingway MBE, Hemingway Design and Chair of Building for Life** said: "What fantastic news. Investing in our town centres is hugely important, not only to look after the precious older buildings but also to improve people's quality of life. Investment like this makes a real difference by giving residents a better place to live and getting the local economy moving. For the livability of our towns and cities it's vital to create urban landscapes that provide something for everyone, places to relax, meet people, a home, a business or even new training opportunities, and the Heritage Lottery Fund's continued support helps this become a reality."

The places benefitting are:

Whitechapel Market High Street 2012 Historic Buildings Scheme, Tower Hamlets, London – first-round pass of £1,387,500 including £40,000 development funding

Whitechapel is a bustling and culturally diverse place. Its high street forms the key link between central London and the Olympic Park and is currently undergoing major regeneration work to help create a lasting legacy from the 2012 Games for East London. The market dates from the 17th century and will be transformed with traditional shop fronts being restored and under-occupied buildings brought into use. This THI, as part of a wider £10m regeneration scheme named 'High Street 2012' run by Tower Hamlets Council, also plans to provide community art and heritage events as it rejuvenates the area.

Pontmorlais, Merthyr Tydfil - first-round pass of £1,637,500 including £50,000 of development funding

Pontmorlais lies in Merthyr Tydfil's town centre and began life as a small Medieval village. It was soon one of the largest towns in Wales and became the iron capital of the world. The High Street was created between 1770 and 1820 and has many historical buildings such as the old Town Hall and the now disused YMCA building. This HLF investment will go towards reversing the poor conditions of these buildings and finding new uses for them. Proposed links with Merthyr Tydfil College will also provide conservation skills training to students, local businesses and residents.

Cefn Mawr THI, Wrexham – first-round pass of £870,600 including £8,400 of development funding

The village of Cefn Mawr was heavily industrialised throughout the 18th and 19th centuries thanks to vast deposits of iron, sandstone and coal. The nearby Llangollen Canal with Pontcysylte Aqueduct was designated a World Heritage

Site in 2009 and is recognised as a masterpiece of engineering. This THI focusses on the commercial centre of the town and is part of a wider conservation shceme dedicated to rejuvenating the whole town. Training programmes will give the local community opportunities to learn heritage skills.

Middleton and Edgar Wood THI, Greater Manchester – first-round pass of £2,025,800 including £50,000 of development funding

Middleton grew from a number of detached rural towns that eventually developed around the silk and cotton industries. It has a number of buildings of major heritage value including several designed by Edgar Wood, a renowned arts and crafts architect who played a part in the emergence of International Modernism in the 1920s. The project will involve repairs to key buildings and restoration of architectural features, as well as placing Middleton firmly on the heritage map through the creation of an Edgar Wood Architecture Trail and a conservation skills training scheme.

Bedford High Street, Bedford – first-round pass of £850,000

This street, dating back to late Saxon and Medieval times, is made up of mainly 18th and 19th-century located within a Conservation Area that has been listed as ‘at risk’. HLF’s investment will bring the run-down living spaces above the shops back into use and refurbish shop fronts and buildings in line with the heritage of the area. Community activities will include guided walks and archaeology events encouraging local people and visitors to get involved with the town’s heritage.

Wellingborough Heritage Regeneration Scheme, Northamptonshire - first-round pass of £1,475,100 including £50,000 of development funding

Wellingborough began life as a small Saxon market town expanding significantly over the years. Its early origins are still visible today with medieval streets surrounding All Hallows Church and Market Place, but the town centre has declined in more recent times, which has put its historic character at risk. This THI will provide the catalyst for further regeneration and will concentrate on repairing the historical townscape and buildings, such as the Grade II listed Golden Hind Hotel, a 1645 coaching inn and the former club house of the Royal Antediluvian Order of the Buffaloes (RAOB)***.

Central Stockton THI, Cleveland – first-round pass of £1,784,900 including £44,500 of development funding

Stockton lies on the banks of the River Tees and was originally a market town, founded at the end of the 12th century. The town is well known for the Darlington and Stockton railway which ran the world's first steam hauled passenger train in 1825. The scheme will reinstate historic features of existing buildings, improve links with the town centre and establish partnerships with local property owners to bring unoccupied buildings back into use. Plans also include providing volunteers with opportunities to learn traditional building skills and take-up work placements.

Portaferry THI, County Down – first-round pass of £1,282,700 including £49,100 of development funding

Portaferry, at the southern tip of the Ards Peninsula on the shores of Strangford Lough, was once a thriving port and boasts many fine merchants' properties dating back to that prosperous era. Today, Strangford Lough is a Marine Nature Reserve and EU Special Area of Conservation, renowned for its wildlife and scenic beauty. The scheme will significantly enhance the town’s historic character, as well as provide opportunities for employment, education and learning, and training in traditional building skills. The initiative hopes to act as a catalyst for further regeneration within the area.

Anstruther THI, Fife - first-round pass of £945,000 including £30,000 of development funding

Once described as a ‘fringe of gold on a beggar’s mantle’, Anstruther is a picturesque coastal town in the East Neuk of Fife. The town is home to many historical buildings which tell the story of when it was a thriving fishing and trading port. This THI will concentrate on the Anstruther Outstanding Conservation Area, a complex of buildings in desparate need of repair, including the A-listed St Nicholas Tower, Hew Scott Hall and Wester Anstruther Town Hall, all of which require substantial structural work.

Camborne, Roskear and Tuckingmill Regeneration, Energy and Skills THI, Cornwall - first-round pass of £520,000 including £20,000 of development funding

Camborne is an important market and industrial town in West Cornwall, and is associated with many great inventors including William Bickford Smith who invented the world’s first safety fuse. Roskear and Tuckingmill are adjoining settlements below South Crofty, Europe’s last working Tin Mine. Both settlements are Conservation Areas within the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site. This funding will concentrate on repairing the architectural detail of the town’s most historic buildings, offer work experience opportunities to local college students and provide a monitored energy saving scheme acting as a model of good practice for the future.

Lower Kirkgate THI, Leeds – first-round pass of £1,051,800 including a development grant of £43,800

Kirkgate is the oldest street in Leeds and links Leeds Parish Church to the city centre. There is evidence of an Anglo-Saxon settlement in the area and the buildings that can be seen today proudly showcase the city’s 19th-century development, making the site one of major historic value. Extensive repairs will be carried out to various heritage buildings with the reinstatement of lost architectural features and refurbishment of vacant buildings. The scheme will bring wider training and work placement opportunities, stimulating interest in the local heritage and involving school children in activities and workshops.

Notes to editors

* A Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) earmarked first-round pass means that money has been set aside by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the scheme in question. Competition at this stage is tough, and while it does not guarantee funding, it is an indication of positive support. The applicants can then progress to the second round and submit a further, fully-developed application to secure the full award. On occasion, development funding will also be awarded at the first round. This early level of strong financial commitment means that THIs can build strong partnerships with the assurance that funding for their scheme is in place provided their final proposals fully meet the programme criteria.

HLF’s Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) encourages partnerships of local organisations to carry out repairs and other works to a number of historic buildings, structures or spaces. Grants range from £500,000 to £2m. To date, HLF has invested almost £200m regenerating towns that have suffered serious social and economic decline.

** Building for Life is the national standard for well-designed homes and neighbourhoods. Good quality housing design can improve social wellbeing and quality of life by reducing crime, improving public health, easing transport problems and increasing property values. Building for Life promotes design excellence and celebrates best practice in the house building industry

*** The Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes (RAOB) is a Fraternal, Benevolent and Social Organisation in the United Kingdom. It is open to any male over the age of 18, provided he is a "true and loyal supporter of the British Crown and Constitution" and he "enters of his own free will and consent". The organisation aids members, their families, those left behind by deceased brethren (widows/orphans) and other charitable organisations. During the 19th century, via the British Empire, the Order spread throughout the British Commonwealth

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 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK

Further information

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