Success for Vindolanda

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Independent charity, the Vindolanda Trust, has been successful in securing a £525,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, which will support a development project costing just over £1m.

Adding to the Vindolanda Trust's existing sites; Roman Vindolanda and The Roman Army Museum, the funding award will allow the purchase of Codley Gate, a five acre plot of archaeological land adjoining that already owned by the Trust.

The land which once formed part of Vindolanda in antiquity contains vital archaeological components of the major Vindolanda site.

Dr Andrew Birley, Director of Excavations, said: "The archaeological importance of this acquisition is extremely significant. For the first time in over 60 years the environs of the last stone fort at Vindolanda will be completely reunited bringing a 'missing part' of the Vindolanda archaeological jigsaw. We can now integrate the land into the Vindolanda Trust's archaeological agenda and work towards the provision of superb and accessible storage for bulk finds. The Heritage Lottery Fund has enabled the Trust to extend its legacy work for the benefit of a whole range of people and we are very thankful for their support."

With the current owners of the property moving on, a rare opportunity was presented to acquire research, protect and preserve the area for the future. Neil and Claire Hainsworth, said: "After many years of living here, our family are delighted that with the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, The Vindolanda Trust are able to make this purchase and reconnect Codley Gate to the Roman site, extending access to the eastern area of the fort and that the old farm steading will have a future as an integral part of the Trust's archaeological activities."

In addition to the land, the Trust will acquire Codley Gate's main farmhouse, an extensive range of superb stone Northumbrian barns, and a luxury holiday cottage which is already popular with a number of Vindolanda's volunteers.

The main barns will be used to extend the Trust's archaeological storage capacity, essential for housing finds from the continuing excavations in museum conditions. With future excavated pottery, bones, inscribed and ornamental stones all housed under cover, this will provide unique access for archaeological researchers and an extension to the existing educational offer at Vindolanda. It will also offer an opportunity to extend the Trust's outstanding volunteer and public access programme.

A variety of interactive workshops will be developed to include archaeological forensics, photography and drawing classes, using unearthed treasures from the Vindolanda plot.

Patricia Birley, Director of the Vindolanda Trust, said: "We are all delighted with the purchase of this land and property and we are grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for its invaluable support. This is an important 'once in a lifetime' acquisition that has a multitude of fantastic benefits for the work of the Vindolanda Trust. It brings vital archaeological land into the Trust's care, will provide a base for future accessible archaeological stores which will facilitate public engagement through high quality workshop programmes and will significantly increase opportunities for users of the Trust's well established volunteer and education programmes."

Ivor Crowther, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund North East, said: “We at the Heritage Lottery Fund are delighted to be supporting this project that has helped secure a rare opportunity to acquire, research and protect the land that immediately adjoins the Vindolanda site. Alongside the exciting archaeological prospects this will bring, the extension of the Vindolanda site also means that the Trust will be able to improve and expand their already vibrant volunteering and learning programmes, helping to open up even further this unique part of our Roman heritage for everyone to learn from and enjoy.”

Notes to editors

In the heart of Northumberland National Park and central section of the iconic Hadrian’s Wall, The Vindolanda Charitable Trust brings you two exciting tourist attractions that dramatically explore Roman life on the edge of the Roman Empire nearly 2000 years ago. Vindolanda is regarded by many as one of the most exciting archaeological sites in Europe. Being able to excavate at a live site is what sets Vindolanda apart, and people from all over the world apply to join archaeologists and take part in the annual dig. The story of Vindolanda continues to unfold as more and more artefacts are uncovered, and visitors, students, amateur archaeologists and volunteers alike are all invited to explore the rich heritage, and to be part of the story.

Further information

Jenny Hayes at r//evolution marketing on 0191 499 8415 or jenny@r-evolution.co.uk

Laura Bates, HLF press office on 020 7591 6027 or lbates@hlf.org.uk