Waterwheel hoisted into Woodbridge Tide Mill

17/11/2011

This marks an important stage in the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) supported restoration of the historic tide mill, with the waterwheel itself funded by £50,000 from the Suffolk Environmental Trust.

In total, HLF have pledged £955,800 towards the project, which aims to preserve this striking local landmark for the benefit of future generations, whilst transforming the experience for visitors to Woodbridge Tide Mill.

Other works involved in the restoration include protecting the foundations of the mill with a new concrete breakwater, and the creation of a new wheelhouse to provide more space for maintenance and viewing.

Interactive models, computer generated graphics, games and puzzles will offer interest and enjoyment to all ages and give ‘hands on’ experience in how the mill and its machinery works.

The conservation work will be supplemented by practical demonstrations to be offered in flour milling. Displays, exhibition boards, information leaflets and audio-visual aids will describe the history of the mill, the lives and working conditions of millers and the impact on the local community, highlighting the connection between tidal power and other sources of sustainable energy in a reduced carbon economy.

Inga Grimsey, Chair of Heritage Lottery Fund Committee for the East of England, said: “It is fantastic to be here at Woodbridge Tide Mill to see first hand the work that is taking place to restore one of Suffolk's much -loved heritage treasures. Thanks to HLF support this project will preserve and restore this rare example of our industrial heritage, whilst creating a wide range of activities and new exhibitions offering visitors new opportunities chance to explore and learn about the mill and its history.”

Nigel Barratt of the Woodbridge Tide Mill Trust said: “This project which started some six years ago is beginning to take shape and we can now see tangible evidence of its successful completion. Woodbridge Tide Mill represents over 800 years of the nation’s heritage. As well as restoring and protecting this historic building, we will be providing a ‘living’ interpretative experience to demonstrate and explain how our ancestors harnessed the power of the tide, long before it was considered an alternative energy source.”

The first recorded evidence of a tide mill on this site dates from 1170. The present Woodbridge Tide Mill was constructed in 1793 and operated until 1957, and was the last working tide mill in the UK. It is still one of only five tide mills that remain of around 70 in the 19th century.

Since then, time and tide, with the constantly changing River Deben has resulted in the deterioration of the fabric and foundations of the Mill. The effects of future climate change, tidal surges, scouring action of the silt, and rising sea levels present an increasingly serious threat to the mill.

Further information

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