York Castle Museum secures investment

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The grant will provide the majority of the funding for a £1.7million project at the museum, which will include a major exhibition on the First World War. This will take place in large new exhibition spaces on the first floor, with all office space moving to the second floor. A lift will be installed allowing disabled access to the upper floors for the first time.

The project also aims to offer 500 volunteering opportunities and involve hundreds of people from across York and the region in developing and delivering the exhibition, activities and gallery spaces.

Work will start in September 2013. York Castle Museum will remain open throughout the project. The new space will open in June 2014 with the exhibition 1914: When the World Changed Forever.

Andrew Morrison, Head Curator at York Museums Trust, said: “This is a huge project which will greatly enhance York Castle Museum – it simply would not have been possible without this significant investment from HLF.

“We have drawn up some exciting plans to create what will be a spectacular exhibition marking the Centenary of the First World War. The refurbished exhibition spaces will give the museum a new dimension and the ability to hold major temporary exhibitions – something which we have not had previously. We are delighted that HLF have backed our plans and we are now looking forward to creating what we hope will be an engaging and thought provoking exhibition for visitors to enjoy.”

The remaining investment for the project will come from York Museums Trust funds. Currently the collection displays and staff offices are on both the first and second floors of the Debtors Prison side of the museum. The project aims to move all offices to the second floor creating working spaces for staff and volunteers. The second floor will also accommodate four bookable community learning rooms for activities. By doing this there will be double the exhibition space on the first floor which will be used to house exhibitions drawn from the museum’s rich social history collections. Both floors will be accessible by the new lift.

1914: When the World Changed Forever will combine the museum's fantastic military, costume and social history collections with new technology to create a major exhibition on the First World War. It will look at many aspects of the conflict and its effects on society back in England – from the horrors of total war to industrial innovation, woman's rights to fish and chips. It will not just be a commemoration of the war, but a more rounded and reflective look at how culture and society’s values were revolutionised in this period. It will include six Hands On Here zones for visitors to get closer to the museum’s collections.

Fiona Spiers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Yorkshire and the Humber said: “This award is excellent news for York and the museum offer in Yorkshire. York Castle Museum is one of the UK’s leading museums of everyday life but has little space to be able to do its nationally significant collections justice. Now, it is especially fitting as we approach the First World War centenary that we can look forward to this exhibition honouring the lives and stories of communities left at home during the conflict for visitors of all ages to learn from.”

The grant will also be used to deliver a four-year long programme of activities to accompany the exhibition and engage a range of audiences. It is hoped that by the end of the exhibition in 2019 more than 500 new volunteers will have taken

the opportunity to engage with the project.

The HLF investment is the latest in a string of high profile refurbishments at York Castle Museum. The entrance foyer was refurbished in 2004 and 2011 and the famous Victorian Street has been developed twice, once in 2006 and once last year, concentrating on York people and businesses.

The sixties exhibition was installed in 2008 and York Castle Prison was created in 2009 to tell the story of the prison and the prisoners. The Riverside Project in 2012 made the outside area near the River Foss much more accessible and inviting.

Notes to editors

More information about 1914: When the World Changed Forever will be released shortly, find out more at York Castle Museum.

First World War: then and now: HLF has just launched a £6million small grants programme to help communities mark the Centenary of the First World War and is making at least £1million available per year for six years until 2019. It will provide grants between £3,000 and £10,000 enabling communities and groups right across the UK to explore, conserve and share their First World War heritage and deepen their understanding of the impact of the conflict. If a group have a project idea to mark the Centenary of the First World War, further details can be obtained from the First World War: then and now page.

Further information

York Museums Trust: Lee Clark, Communications Manager on 01904 687 673, email: lee.clark@ymt.org.uk.