Young history detectives ready to investigate

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A £21,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) means the group of 20 teenagers can begin investigating how life has changed from 1900 to the present day in the March East and Waterlees Wards.

The project, run by Fenland-based art and education organisation Atelier East, will see the 13 to 19-year-olds scouring parish records and historic documents, collecting photographs and interviewing elderly residents.

The group, who are calling themselves the Young Curators Forum, will use the information gleaned from such sources to create two exhibitions. One will be displayed at the Wisbech and Fenland Museum while the other, a travelling display, will visit community centres around the district.

A key aim of the work is to train the young participants in a range of skills including research and photography and to encourage teamwork and volunteering. They will then be able to pass on to others in their age group details of their 18-month project by visiting youth groups to encourage others to design their own heritage schemes. They will also give talks to explain their discoveries to the local communities and upload a newly created photographic record on the Cambridgeshire Community Archives Network.

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: “This exciting project is a great example of how lottery players’ money can engage young people in their heritage whilst helping them to gain new skills in the process. There are lots of interesting heritage stories to tell about how these communities have altered over the past century and I hope this project will inspire these young people to become ambassadors to promote heritage to others. We are always looking for new projects to fund, especially in the Fens, so if any groups are interested in applying, they should contact us to find out more.”

For Atelier East Karen Harvey says: "We couldn’t believe the news when we heard! The young people who developed the idea are really pleased, and I am very proud of their hard work and dedication to working with, and improving, their local community. We can’t wait to get started on the project and recruit more young people to get involved!"

MP for North East Cambridgeshire, Stephen Barclay, said: “I am delighted to welcome this grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund for local teenagers. I have been working closely with the Heritage Lottery who have recognised that our area has received insufficient funding in the past, and was pleased to welcome them to the grant funding seminar I held last week.”

Notes to editors

Heritage Lottery Fund uses money raised through the National Lottery to fund a wide variety of projects including archives, community history, local culture and traditions, wildlife and green spaces, archaeology and museums. We have awarded more then £308million to the East of England.

Heritage Lottery Fund is always looking for new projects to fund, especially from The Fens and surrounding areas. If any group has an idea for a project, they should call 01223 224 870 and ask to speak to the development team.

Further information

Please contact Roland Smith at the Heritage Lottery fund, on 020 7591 6047 / 07713 486 420 or rolands@hlf.org.uk, or Phil Cooper on 07889 949 173

Karen Harvey, Artistic Director, Atelier East, on: 01945 773 915