Norton Priory Museum and Gardens wins Heritage



Norton Priory

Norton Priory Museum and Gardens and Halton Borough Council have received a confirmed grant of £3.7m from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the project, Monastery to Museum 900, it was announced today.

Norton Priory is the best excavated monastic site in Europe and this project aims to preserve and restore the 12th-century priory undercroft, exhibit the full breadth of the museum's extensive collections and interpret the site's 900 year history. With the support of the HLF the site can, for the first time, fully realise its potential as a tourist destination in Cheshire as well as continuing locally with its many community programmes within Halton.

Architectural plans for the redeveloped museums have already been progressed and can be seen on Norton Priory's website. They show the increased exhibition spaces that will allow many more objects from the museum's collection to be displayed, along with national loans for the first time. Modern facilities and a new café will also much improve the visitor experience. A new entranceway will better orientate visitors and put the medieval remains at the heart of the new centre. In the undercroft, the 12th-century stonework will be re-pointed and the colourful Victorian floor restored to its former glory.

Councillor Eddie Jones, speaking on behalf of Halton Borough Council who are partners in the scheme, said: "The council is proud and pleased to have successfully played our part in developing this ambitious and exciting scheme for

living history with our excellent partners at Norton Priory. It is particularly gratifying that the HLF have recognised the hard work, creativity and dedication that has gone into this project; thus we are appreciative of their decision to support our vision for this important historical and very attractive site. We are all now committed to preserving this cultural gem of our borough and further enhancing the fascinating visitor experience for our residents."

Paul Mathews, Chair of the Trustees for Norton Priory, said: "This grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund will enable us to match the wonderful work done by staff and volunteers in and for the community with museum, gallery and cafe facilities that are state of the art."

Explaining the importance of the HLF support, Sara Hilton, Head of HLF North West, said: “Norton Priory has been witness to the ebb and flow of nearly a thousand years of social, political and religious change in the North West. We thought this was an innovative and exciting project and by awarding a £3.7m grant the museum transformation can now commence. We are particularly impressed by the trust’s decision to make the new museum building energy-efficient as well as their close working relationship with Halton Borough Council who have demonstrated an unwavering support for the trust and its proposals.”

The full cost of the project is £4.4m and the trust is also supported by Halton Borough Council, the Wolfson Foundation, Arts Council England, Foyle Foundation, Granada Foundation and Radcliffe Trust. However, a further £190,000 still needs to be raised before the project can commence. Building and conservation work is due to start at the museum in January 2015 with the redeveloped museum reopening in August 2016. During the lifetime of the project the museum will be closed but the Walled Garden will remain open all year around at a reduced admission charge. Halton Castle, a 12th-century ruin also managed by the trust will be an additional attraction to visitors. This new offer, together with an exciting programme of events and excavations will be the icing on top of the cake as Norton Priory celebrates its 900th birthday!

Notes to editors

About Norton Priory and the project, Monastery to Museum 900
Norton Priory Museum and Gardens is an Independent Charitable Trust. The site was founded as a priory in 1115 before becoming a Mitred Abbey in the late 14th century. Following its dissolution by Henry VIII in 1536, it became the home of the Brooke family for over 400 years. It was not until 1985 after ten years of the most complete archaeological excavations of a monastic site in Europe that the museum first opened its doors to visitors. 2015, when the new museum is expected to have been built, will coincide with the priory’s 900th birthday and will be a wonderful and fitting celebration of this ancient pedigree. Today, with funding and support from Halton Borough Council Norton Priory welcomes more than 34,000 visitors a year including 8,000 school children. Multi Award-winning, it is also home to an extraordinary Georgian Walled Garden, orchards, woodland walks and sculpture trail. It operates with the invaluable support of Halton Borough Council and its visitors, working in partnership to deliver numerous community programmes and engaging diverse audiences within the Borough as well as attracting tourism to the region.

Further information

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