Outside view of Oakham Castle, Rutland

Oakham Castle has been awarded the money that will be used to carry out extensive restoration work, introduce a new and exciting events programme, as well as provide opportunity to host re-enactments and living history.

In 2012 Rutland County Council (RCC), Oakham Town Council, and the Friends of Rutland County Museum and Oakham Castle, together with the support of community groups and English Heritage, formed a project board to drive forward improvements and restoration of the castle. After months of hard work from all the partners, the final HLF bid was submitted earlier this year.

Council Leader Roger Begy, said: “Good things come in threes, and this is a really great week for Rutland and Oakham Castle, with a visit from The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall, the first Horseshoe Presentation for nine years, and the announcement of our bid being approved.”

Councillor Begy, added: “It’s hard to put into words how delighted everyone at the council and on the Board is to have our bid approved by the Heritage Lottery Fund. We knew from the outset that this was an extremely competitive process and we have given 110% on behalf of the local community to make this happen. It is very proud day for Rutland.”

Councillor Begy, went on to say: “This is a really great week for Oakham Castle with a visit from the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall taking place within days of our bid being approved. The hard work starts now and we are very clear that this funding will be used for more than just protecting the past. We are looking to widen the reach of

Oakham Castle and look to what we can do in the future to develop new things for visitors to see and do."

Vanessa Harbar, Head of HLF, East Midlands, said: "Oakham Castle is, without doubt, one of Rutland's finest heritage treasures. The stunning Great Hall is home to a unique collection of horse shoes dating from the 12th century, it attracts thousands of visitors every year. We felt it was timely to support essential restoration work to the site and also support the council's plans to refresh the complementary activity and education programmes. Once the project is completed, we are confident the castle and historic town will continue to draw in both established as well as new visitors to the area."

In addition to the plans for extensive restoration work and additional events, other areas identified for improvement are repair of the castle walls, new and improved toilet facilities, better information and signage, and improved facilities for weddings and family events.

Oakham Castle is the best preserved Norman great hall in England and was used extensively until 1970 as the local court. Occasional crown courts and coroner's inquests still take place.

However, the castle is best known for its collection of commemorative horseshoes donated by peers of the realm.

Over 230 horseshoes hang on the walls of the great hall. These represent the unique custom that every peer of the realm must give a horseshoe to the lord of the manor on their first visit to Oakham.

The custom has been followed for at least 500 years and probably dates back to the 12th century. The oldest surviving horseshoe is said to have been given by Edward IV around 1470. The most recent were given by HRH The Princess Royal in 1999, HRH The Prince of Wales in 2003, HRH Princess Alexandra 2005, and now The Duchess of Cornwall in 2014.

For more information about the project, please visit the offical Oakham Castle website.

Notes to Editors

Approximately 33,000 people visited Oakham Castle during 2013.

The key aims of this project are to:

- Develop Oakham Castle as a cultural centre for Rutland
- Consolidate the castle walls to ensure conservation, and to restore its visual impact in the town centre
- Conserve the great hall to provide a safe environment for the historic horseshoe collection
- Improved access to the site including improved facilities
- Greater promotion of the history and heritage of Oakham Castle and Rutland
- Work more closely with Discover Rutland to promote Oakham as a tourist destination to the benefit of the county
- Generate increased income from the site to help ensure its long term viability
- Enable more and better quality community events to take place in the grounds