

Into the Future at Saddleworth

10/10/2014

The museum, run as a registered charity, celebrated its 50th year in 2012 as an independent museum serving the local community. The overall aim of the project is to put the museum on a sound footing for the next 50 years.

The planning is already well in hand; the museum will close at the end of June 2015 and have a formal opening in May of 2016.

The project will see the refurbishment of the old mill building dating back to 1862 that makes up part of the museum site, extensions to the front creating a strong presence on the main high street, and an extension to the side with new reception and retail areas. The project will include putting a lift into the reception area which will give the building full disabled access. The work will involve conservation work on collections, improvements to existing stores, continued digitisation and making the museum collections more accessible to all ages. The project includes a major re-display of the exhibition galleries which will be a wonderful opportunity to tell a lot of Saddleworth's history and show a lot more of its varied collections.

An educational programme is included as part of the project with a three year supported programme which aims to open up the museum's collections and promote Saddleworth's rich history to people of all ages from pre-school to retirement through an innovative programme.

The building is a focal point for the local community and is currently used by many local community groups for various events. The old mill section is all that remains of Victoria Mill, a textile mill built in 1862, it once occupied the site of the museum car park. In 1979, extensions were added to the museum with a large gallery area which overlooks the adjacent Huddersfield Narrow Canal.

Roger Tanner MBE, President and founder of the museum, said: "We have been working towards this project for a long time and would like to thank the Heritage Lottery Fund for supporting the scheme which with all the improvements at the museum to its facilities and an opportunity to present new exhibitions on Saddleworth's rich history will mark the start of another chapter in the history of the museum which has already served the local community for over 50 years."

The Into the Future project has been put together working with consultants Headland Design who have worked on numerous heritage projects including the Peoples History Museum in Manchester and the Fusiliers Museum in Bury. The architectural planning work has been done both inside and outside by OMI Architects whose projects have included The Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester; The Creswell Craggs Museum, Creswell and The Fusiliers Museum, Bury. The project has been supported throughout with advice and a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: "Saddleworth Museum and Art Gallery provides an important focal point for the local community to learn about Saddleworth's heritage story. Using this HLF grant the dedicated team behind the Into the Future project will be able to transform the existing museum via improved access, enhanced displays and exhibitions and an engaging learning programme, all ensuring the museum's future for many years to come."

Notes to editors

Saddleworth Museum opened in 1962 and is run as a registered charity. Apart from functioning as a museum with the aims of preserving and presenting Saddleworth's rich history, it has a large gallery area which exhibits work by local, regional and national artists as well as holding an annual 'Open art' community exhibition. It runs an educational service providing workshops on various themes. The complex is run as a community resource with the gallery area providing space for lectures by local historical society and civic trust, a venue for charity fundraising events. The museum also provides an un-funded visitor information service for the local area which helps to support tourism and local businesses in the area.

Further information

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