Bomber Command Centre gets wings with

Bomber Command Lincolnshire Bomber Command Memorial Trust

The Lincolnshire Bomber Command Memorial Trust (LBCM), in partnership with the University of Lincoln, has been awarded earmarked funding of £3.1million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the creation of the International Bomber Command Centre (IBCC), it was announced today.

The project will, for the first time, provide a central hub for Bomber Command's heroic and difficult story to be told. This will include presenting the experiences of those who served, supported or were affected by Bomber Command’s campaigns in interactive state-of-the-art digital displays.

Dan Snow, Historian and ambassador of the project, said: “There are few more deserving projects in the UK than the International Bomber Command Centre. Lincolnshire needs a proper memorial to the service personnel who faced appalling conditions as they did their bit to liberate Europe from fascism. There is no other centre in Britain or any other country where the history of the bomber offensive can be preserved, gathered, curated, studied and debated. This centre will be a world leader.”

During the Second World War, more than 125,000 men served as aircrew in Bomber Command. Less than 70,000 returned - an attrition rate of just 44.4%. Only 30% of those that flew got to the end of the Second World War without being killed, injured or taken prisoner of war. They were supported by thousands of men and women who served in

ground crew, with the Air Transport Auxiliary, the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and many others.

28% of those who died came from outside the UK and over 60 nations were represented amongst the Bomber Command personnel lists. By war's end, nearly 30% of the men serving in the Bomber Command as a whole were Canadian. Some of those listed in the RCAF were in fact Americans (900) who crossed the border before the USA joined the Allied forces in order to support the campaign. Squadrons made up of Poles, Czechs, and other European refugees including Germans also made significant contributions.

The project will also create an archive that digitises and preserves hundreds of personal stories and documents including the recollections of some of the few remaining survivors of the campaigns. Much of this information has never before been available for public view.

Once complete, the centre will provide a world-class facility to serve as a point for recognition, remembrance and reconciliation for Bomber Command. It comprises of several interrelated elements: the Chadwick Centre, the Memorial Spire, the Bomber Command Archive and the International Peace Garden. Work on the construction element of the project is due to start in December 2014 with the first phase being completed by June 2015, to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

The money from HLF will be spent on telling the story of Bomber Command through the interactive displays and the archive. The rest of the costs for the £8million project, including for the construction of the memorial spire, are being raised through other means.

Lincolnshire earned the title of 'Bomber County' as the Headquarters of both One and Five Groups and a third of all the UK's stations were based in the county. Many of the most well-known operations flew from one of these 27 bases and 46% of all of the Command's losses flew out of the county's bases.

Television and radio presenter and IBCC supporter, Hon Dr John Sergeant, said: "Having a centre devoted to telling and explaining the story of the bomber offensive in the Second World War is long overdue. I am delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund is supporting the already substantial work carried out internationally by the team in Lincoln and look forward to next year's unveiling.

"The unveiling will come at a time when the Nation and our Commonwealth and Allied friends will be remembering the sacrifice of those who fought and hoping that the 70th anniversary of the ending of the Second World War will engender a new spirit of reconciliation between old enemies who are today friends."

The trust is already working with over 100 volunteers who are researching, recording oral histories and giving support at events. The project aims to engage with over 600 volunteers by 2020, offering training in a wide number of areas. The centre will have a dedicated education service working with school groups visiting the centre and through outreach programmes including the creation of schools packs.

Commenting on the award, Tony Worth, Chairman of the LBCM Trust said: "This support from HLF will help the trust develop this long overdue project to ensure that this fascinating, if difficult, story is told for generations to come. This is the not the story of rights and wrongs of war or the politics involved but of the people who were affected. As Lord Lieutenant of the Lincolnshire I am inordinately proud of the support given by the whole county for the project."

Vanessa Harbar, Head of HLF East Midlands, said: "The men and women who served in Bomber Command played a vital role during the Second World War and it's fitting for Lincolnshire to have a dedicated centre where their story can

be fully explored and remembered. As the country prepares to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of this formative conflict, the Heritage Lottery Fund is pleased to be giving its support of £3.1m towards the creation of this international resource."

Notes to editors

Further expressions of support

Mary Stuart, Vice Chancellor of the University of Lincoln and IBCC Trustee, said: "The award of the Heritage Lottery grant is brilliant news. It will enable the University, as a partner in the IBCC, to unlock a wealth of expertise, talent and creative energy in building an unrivalled digital archive on Bomber Command, which will have truly international reach. It is vitally important that the direct experiences of those caught up in Bomber Command campaigns, on the ground and in the skies, should be captured and preserved for future generations. There is so much to learn from these stories, about fortitude and bravery, as well as suffering and trauma, and I feel immensely proud that the University will be playing a central role in this task."

Cllr Martin Hill, Leader of Lincolnshire County Council, said: "I am delighted the project has been successful in their heritage bid. Lincolnshire is the right place to commemorate the bravery of the men of Bomber Command and will greatly add to all the attractions the county has to offer."

Diane Lees, Chief Executive of the Imperial War Museums and adviser to the IBCC, said: "I am delighted that HLF have been able to give such generous support to this important project; the grant will make a significant difference to its future."

Stephen Philips QC, MP for Sleaford and North Hykeham, said: "I am delighted to hear of this new funding. This project is vital in ensuring that we do not forget the determination and sacrifice of those who served in Bomber Command, and safeguarding their legacy for generations to come."

Karl McCartney, MP for Lincoln, said: "I am delighted to hear that the Heritage Lottery fund has provided substantial funding for this project and has recognised the importance of our county's aviation history. Lincolnshire has a proud military history across all the Forces as a county and indeed is known widely and fondly by many national and international friends as 'Bomber County'. It is important that we continue to recognise the bravery displayed by many of those who fought for our freedom in World War Two, and I congratulate all those who have worked so hard to secure these funds to enable the international Bomber Command Centre to become a reality."

President of the Bomber Command Association, Air Commodore Charles Clark DFC, said: "Knowing how difficult it was to raise the funds for the memorial in London, it is exciting news that the HLF are supporting this worthy project. We have to do everything we can to ensure this project is delivered whilst we still have some veterans alive."

Les Rutherford, Bomber Command Veteran, said: "As a veteran of Bomber Command I am delighted by the resurgence of interest and the financial assistance given in remembrance of the 55,573 men killed in Bomber Command during WW2. We must never forget the dedication and sacrifice of these men and the part they played in eventual victory."

Ron Brown, Warrant Officer Flight Engineer, 218 Squadron and 75 New Zealand Squadron said: "The wonderful news of the extremely generous grant is truly exhilarating, as a RAF Bomber Command Veteran - it is so satisfying to know that there are still good citizens around who genuinely care and respect the 55,573 of my young colleagues who flew night after night on the brink of extinction and made the ultimate sacrifice. We will remember them!"

H. James Flowers, 50/44 squadrons rear gunner, said: “Bomber County is the place where many of us operated from so most veterans think that this is the place where we should be remembered. The Magnificent Memorial, digital archive, exhibition and International Peace Gardens when completed will ensure that memories of our sacrifices will live on.”

About the Lincolnshire Bomber Command Memorial Trust

The trust was set up in 2009 with the aim of building a memorial and interpretation centre to relate the story of the people involved with and affected by Bomber Command.

Further information

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