Toynbee Hall beacon will shine brighter thanks to



Exterior of Toynbee Hall

Aldgate-based Toynbee Hall is a social welfare charity whose purpose has always been to eradicate poverty and increase opportunities for people to fulfil their potential. As the world's first university settlement the charity has welcomed visitors as diverse as Gandhi, Marconi and Lenin. Previous residential volunteers included former prime minister Clement Attlee and father of the welfare state William Beveridge. One of the first Citizen's Advice Bureaux was held there and the building also witnessed the founding of the Child Poverty Action Group. Its history is recorded in extensive archives which will be digitised with the help of specially trained volunteers.

Repairs and restoration work to the Grade II listed building will enable currently uninhabited parts of the structure to be brought back into use. Heritage will be placed at the heart of Toynbee Hall's educational programmes with the creation of a new Heritage Learning Centre and the employment of a learning and participation manager.

The charity's continued involvement at the forefront of movements of social change has been described as a 'golden thread' that ties its heritage with its current mission and its future vision. The project will include a series of exhibitions charting Toynbee Hall's impact on a range of social reforms as well as its role through historic events such as the 1920s General Strike and the founding of the Welfare State.

Blondel Cluff, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund London Committee said: “Toynbee Hall is a prime example of London’s living heritage where a combination of over a century of tangible and intangible heritage continues to serve the needs of Londoners today.”

Improved access to the building (plus the construction of a new extension that is not part of the HLF grant) will also increase public use of the space while at the same time historical information will be made available online. Volunteers will play a crucial role in the new education programme acquiring skills that will include research, curating exhibitions and recording interviews with people who have had contact with Toynbee Hall in past years. The project will also employ two apprentices who will work to achieve heritage NVQ qualifications.

Toynbee Hall Chief Executive Graham Fisher said: “Toynbee Hall’s mission over the last 130 years has been focused on tackling poverty and disadvantage, the HLF grant will not only preserve our 130 year-old halls but will allow us to use our heritage to inspire a new generation of social reformers to find new solutions to tackle poverty and inequality.”

Notes to editors

Toynbee Hall was established in 1884 as a university settlement by social reformers Samuel and Henrietta Barnett. Toynbee Hall was named after Oxford historian and fellow reformer Arnold Toynbee who had died the previous year.

The halls were built as the first university settlement house of the settlement movement. Students from Oxford and Cambridge University lived there to undertake social work and research in the deprived areas of the East End.

The Whitechapel Art Gallery grew from Toynbee Hall’s annual art exhibitions in 1901 and the Child Poverty Action Group in 1965. One of the first CAB’s was established there in 1939.

Further information

HLF press office: Vicky Wilford on 020 7591 6046 / 07973 401 937, email: vickyw@hlf.org.uk or Phil Cooper on 07889 949173.

Toynbee Hall: Jane Cade on 020 7392 2988.