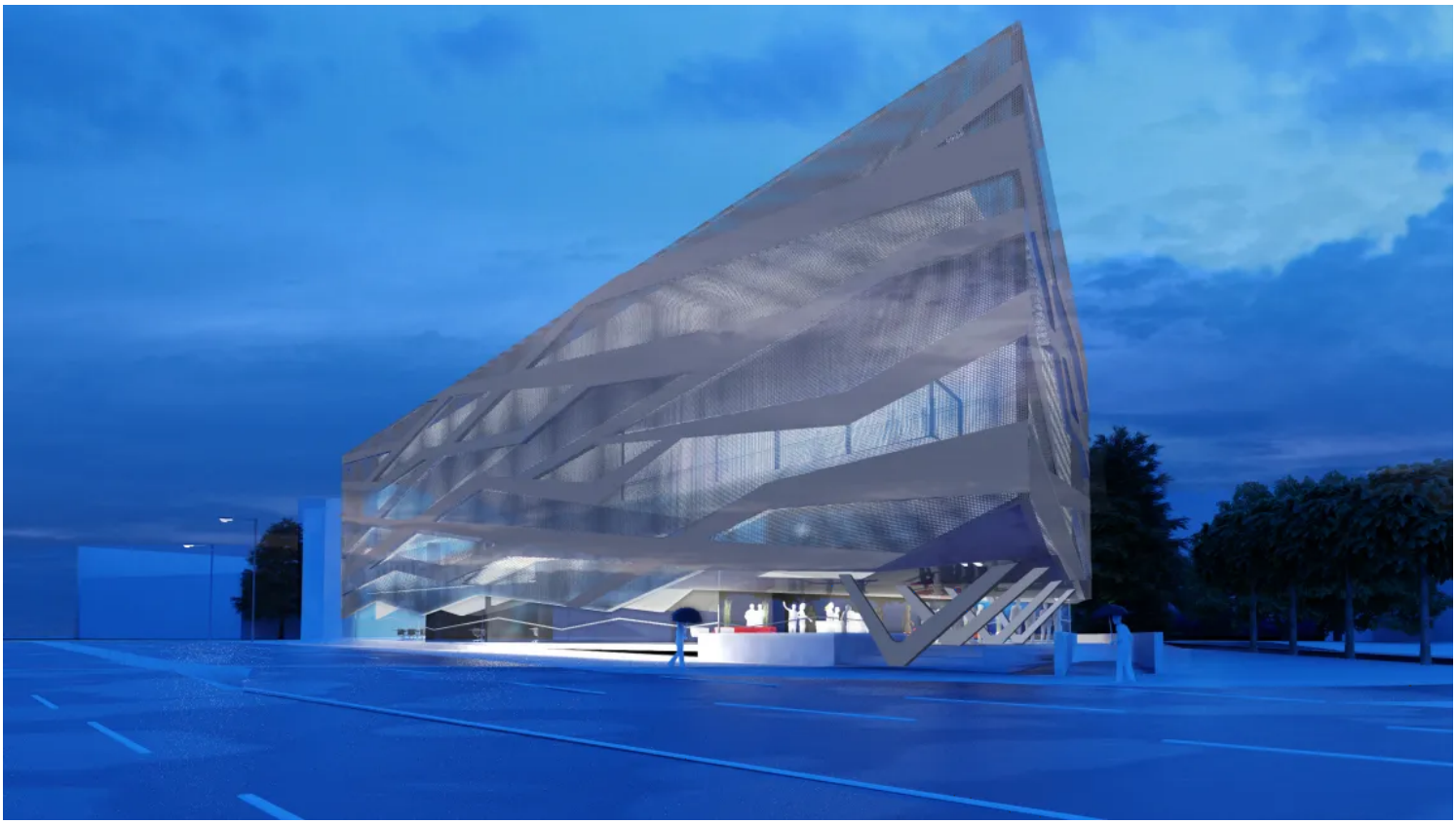


Visual representation of proposed new West Yorkshire Archive

The new archive centre will be built in Kirkgate, Wakefield, to provide a secure and stable environment to store over 10million records, housing the collections of the former counties of West Yorkshire and the West Riding, as well as those in the Wakefield district.

The collections are currently held in the old Registry of Deeds building in Newstead Road, Wakefield, which is no longer fit for purpose. They include all the court proceedings of the former county of the West Riding which was the third largest and most populous county in England and a large collection of the National Coal Board's mining records. Former miners are already helping to conserve, catalogue and care for the archives.

The files of the Stanley Royd Mental Health Hospital, where thousands of local men, women and children received treatment between 1841 and 1991, are also among the records to be stored at the new facility. This collection has a pivotal role in the nation's history as it documents changes in the treatment of mental illness.

Cllr Peter Box CBE, Leader of Wakefield Council said: "This is fantastic news as we have fought for a long time to keep the archives in Wakefield. It means we will have a brand new building in which to keep the archives in Wakefield, the seat of the old West Riding. Today's announcement will deliver a further boost to Wakefield, adding yet another important attraction which will encourage even more visitors to our region. The records are part of our heritage and history and I am very proud that funding has been secured through the Heritage Lottery Fund, for this nationally-important collection of information."

The new building will also house a history centre, with a wide-reaching programme of events, courses and opportunities to connect people with local and family history. It will provide a welcoming place where groups can meet and discuss their interest in heritage.

Richard Morris, HLF Trustee and research professor at the University of Huddersfield, said: “Whether you are looking to find where your ancestors went to school or explore how industry made the area what it is today, these millions of documents are invaluable - a treasure trove of history

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"It’s clear that they are under threat where they are now and that this new purpose-built archive is needed to ensure they will be stored safely and opened up for public use for many years to come."

Cllr Ros Lund, the Wakefield councillor who chairs the Joint Services Committee, which oversees the work of the archive service, said: “This is a fantastic day and it’s great news that we will have an amazing new building in which to safeguard millions records from the past, many of which are of regional, national and international importance.”

Work on the new building is due to start next year, once contractors have been appointed, with completion due in 2016."

Further information

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