50th anniversary of Mimosa Voyage marked with £1million Heritage Lottery Grant for Llanuwchllyn



Eglwys Deiniol Sant, Llanuwchllyn

Cylch y Llan will restore and bring Grade II* listed Eglwys Deiniol Sant back into community use whilst bringing significant local histories together. An exhibition space will share stories including that of Michael D Jones, founder of the Welsh colony of settlers in Patagonia in 1865 in time to mark 150 years since the maiden voyage to Y Wladfa.

A new 12-bed 5* bunkhouse and centre for cyclists and tourists will also be created as part of the new centre, providing new jobs, volunteer and training opportunities and a new attraction to the growing local heritage economy.

Jennifer Stewart, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund in Wales, said: “Seeing the potential of empty places of worship is vitally important to ensuring their future. We’re always excited to see new plans and ideas for bringing them back into use and this project perfectly demonstrates how an important historical building can continue to play a key part in a local community. We are really pleased to be able to invest National Lottery money to transform and sustain this important heritage.

“Llanuwchllyn has such a rich history and as we mark 150 years since the Mimosa’s voyage to Patagonia, we’re thrilled to be able to support a new local heritage centre and help them celebrate this important anniversary.”

Welsh cultural centre

Built in 1873 on the site of a medieval building, Eglwys Deiniol Sant stands at the heart of the village of Llanuwchllyn and contains the 1395 effigy of Lord of Penllyn. The project will explore the importance of Llanuwchllyn in relation to Welsh language and culture having been home to Owen M Edwards, the first Chief Inspector of Schools for Wales, his son, Sir Ifan ap Owen Edwards, founder of Urdd Gobaith Cymru and Michael D Jones, the 'pioneer of Welsh Freedom'.

Mel Williams from Cylch y Llan, said: "Eglwys Deiniol Sant has played a central role physically and emotionally in the history of Llanuwchllyn and through this project we hope to ensure that it remains that way. Even though we are a small community, the role Llanuwchllyn has played in Wales' history is significant and we want to share this heritage whilst securing the future of one of our most prominent landmarks. We will now be able to celebrate our past but also bring the church to a new audience through the new visitor centre."

Sustainable visitor centre

The church has been closed since 2006 and will now be turned into a multifunctional community and visitor space. It will include a 12-bed cyclist's bunkhouse providing a new sustainable base for those interested in activity holidays which will link up with a local bike hire shop and connect the village with the national cycle network.

Local Assembly Member, Dafydd Elis-Thomas AM, has welcomed the grant: "I'm thrilled to see further investment by the Heritage Lottery Fund in this area. We've already seen investment in Yr Ysgwrn and the regeneration of Dolgellau in the past year and this project will further emphasise the rich local heritage which is particularly important as we mark the important anniversary of the establishment of Y Wladfa."

Notes to editors

- Bringing the Grade II* listed Eglwys Deiniol Sant in Llanuwchllyn, Gwynedd, back into use with community and multifunctional, event, display and activity space, toilets and kitchen facilities and a compact cyclists bunkhouse to attract and retain visitors to the village.
- Helping audiences learn about themes including powerful landowners, rebellion and civil war, migration including the important anniversary of the 'Mimosa' voyage to Y Wladfa (Patagonia), significant local people, Welsh language and education in Llanuwchllyn. Traditional and innovative bilingual interpretation proposed includes graphic panels, quiz trails, touch screens, films, replicas, interactive landscape models, storytelling chair and interactive website.
- Learning opportunities include open days; food festivals; education packs at Key Stage 2 and 3; storytelling; guided tours; family history research days; ecology workshops; nature walks; music, history and literature master classes; and historical talks.
- Volunteers will receive training in oral history recording, health and safety, Welsh language, food hygiene, first aid, archive and family history, website and social media updating and heritage guiding.

Further information

Rhodri ab Owen, on tel: 02920 442 020 / 07973 540 290 or email: rhodri@positifgroup.co.uk.