Sir Ian McKellen opens groundbreaking LGBT+



Sir Ian McKellen at the opening People's History Museum

Sir Ian McKellen has officially opened the HLF-supported Never Going Underground exhibition at the People's History Museum in Manchester.

Thanks to National Lottery players, this groundbreaking exhibition, made possible by a £63,000 HLF grant, explores the heritage behind the LGBT+ rights movement from the late 19th century to the present day.

The exhibition, which opened to the public on 25 February 2017, marks the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which partially decriminalised homosexual acts.

Ian McKellen said: "We should all accept the simple fact that we should love each other. Radical non-conformist passion defines this city and it's wonderful that the People's History Museum should be telling this story. I hope this exhibition can go across the country so that this story can be told, and then it should travel the world."

The fight for equality

Drawing upon the slogans and campaigns that pushed forward the progression towards equality, the exhibition explores events as far back as 1625, the only surviving record of a conviction for female sodomy in the UK, to 2012, when hate

crime on the basis of sexual orientation was recognised in England and Wales.

Nine volunteer Community Curators were trained in the use of archives and researched LGBT+ history, interviewing campaigners and gathering art, photography, newspaper reports and testimonies.

Visitors can also see the iconic red anorak worn by actress Julie Hesmondhalgh playing Hayley Cropper in ITV's *Coronation Street* and posters from Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, as featured in the film *Pride*.

Changing attitudes, changing laws

Never Going Underground is part of a wider community-led project to uncover the history of the LGBT+ activists who fought for equality, exploring the changes in legislation and attitudes over the years.

Until September 2017, a programme of free learning sessions, public events and family-focused activities will take place, linking with national events, like Pride. The People's History Museum has worked with four partners: LGBT Foundation, Proud 2b Parents, The Proud Trust and Manchester Lesbian and Gay Chorus.

National Lottery investment

Since 1994, HLF has invested more than £2.8million in over 80 projects led by and benefiting LGBT communities across the UK.

Tiffany Hunt, Chair of HLF North West Committee, said: "I'm delighted to be visiting Never Going Underground and seeing the incredible impact of National Lottery players' money. This pioneering exhibition will preserve an underexplored part of the UK's heritage for future generations and pay tribute to those who have fought as part of the on-going struggle for LGBT+ rights."