Official opening of Museum nan Eilean, the UK's



Nicola Sturgeon at the opening of Museum nan Eilean

Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, joined Sir Peter Luff, HLF Chair, to officially open the UK's first Gaelic museum and archive.

The Museum nan Eilean is housed in one of Scotland's most remarkable castles. Lews Castle in Stornoway was derelict for many years but has now been restored to its Victorian splendour as a museum celebrating the heritage of the Outer Hebrides.

[quote=Lucy Casot, Head of HLF Scotland]"Lews Castle is a gateway for the cultural heritage not only of Lewis but of all the islands across the Outer Hebrides..."[/quote]

The ambitious project was funded by £4.6million raised through the National Lottery. It has seen the exterior and ground floor of the castle transformed and an award-winning new extension created to house the state-of-the-art museum telling the stories of life on the islands.

The creation of the museum has seen the return to the island of six of the internationally renowned Lewis Chessmen, on loan from the British Museum, as well as items from the National Museums Scotland and National Archives of Scotland.

Over 20 community heritage societies (Comainn Eachdraidh) from across the islands have come together to help interpret the way the story of the Outer Hebrides – the lifestyle, traditions, culture and language - is celebrated and shared.

Major tourist destination

“Thanks to National Lottery players, Lews Castle is flourishing as a major tourist destination regenerating the local economy through a boost in visitor numbers,” said Lucy Casot, Head of HLF Scotland.

“It is a gateway for the cultural heritage not only of Lewis but of all the islands across the Outer Hebrides, celebrating and sharing the history and stories of this amazing part of the world.”

New jobs have also been created in the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Heritage Service and through the opening of a new shop and café. Experts in traditional building were also used in the restoration project.

The opening of Lews Castle and museum builds on earlier National Lottery investment in Stornoway. The £1.25m Townscape Heritage project completed in 2004 restored a number of historic buildings, including the Town Hall, helping to transform the harbour area into a vibrant and attractive place to live, work and visit.



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Stornoway Harbour

Stornoway Townscape Heritage Initiative - Iomairt Dualchas Dealbh-baile Steornabhaigh