National Lottery support for historic castle and



Pupils from Downshire Primary School visiting Hillsborough Castle Rory Moore

The £4.8m award from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) will transform the visitor experience at the site, ready to welcome an expected 200,000 people each year by 2019.

Hillsborough Castle is part of a 100 acre estate made up of historic buildings, gardens and parklands in County Down. The major new project, led by independent charity Historic Royal Palaces (HRP), will conserve and interpret the site's unique heritage, increase accessibility with the installation of new visitor facilities and provide a range of opportunities for learning and skills development.

Anna Carragher, UK Trustee and Chair of HLF in Northern Ireland, said: "Thanks to National Lottery players the important natural, cultural and built heritage of Hillsborough Castle will be conserved and opened up for many more people to enjoy.

"This unique heritage attraction will become a must-see attraction, allowing visitors to learn more about its fascinating history, enjoy a leisurely stroll through the beautiful gardens or tour the historic State Rooms."

Outside works will be carried out to conserve the historic features of the Walled Garden, including its original quadrant layout and central pool, and enhance its original planting. The Lost Garden, which had become overgrown and difficult

to access, will be reinstated and new paths, bridges and trails installed to allow visitors to fully explore the extensive grounds. New visitor facilities including ticketing and a retail space will be created, and the Stable Yard used to house a dedicated learning centre for families, schools and youth and community groups.

Inside the Castle visitors will be able to tour the State Rooms, including the newly conserved and re-presented Throne Room, Drawing Room and Staircase Hall - learning more about their use as a venue for royal visits, political discussions and entertaining. The tour will also give visitors an insight into life for those living and working in the 'back-of-house' areas.

An ambitious volunteer programme will provide opportunities for learning and development, with the gardens becoming a hub for horticulture and heritage skills. Training will also be provided for a number of roles including visitor information, tour-guiding, conservation and events.

Patricia Corbett, Head of Hillsborough Castle, said: "We are absolutely delighted that the HLF has chosen to support our exciting plans for Hillsborough Castle. This major project will enable us to open up this fascinating and beautiful historic site to the widest possible audience. Work to create the new facilities is already well underway and we look forward to welcoming many more visitors to Hillsborough Castle in years to come."

Notes to editors

Hillsborough Castle is currently open for the spring/summer season with tours available on selected dates until October. Please visit www.hrp.org.uk for opening hours and admission prices.

Established by Royal Charter in 1998, Historic Royal Palaces is the independent charity that looks after the Tower of London, Hampton Court Palace, Kensington Palace the Banqueting House, Kew Palace and Hillsborough Castle in Northern Ireland. With the exception of Hillsborough Castle, these palaces are owned by The Queen on behalf of the nation, and Historic Royal Palaces manages them for the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. Historic Royal Palaces cares for Hillsborough Castle under a separate contract with the Northern Ireland Office. Historic Royal Palaces raises all its own funds and depends on the support of our visitors, members, donors, sponsors and volunteers.

Further information

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