

Weald and Downland Living Museum unveils £6m development

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Ten years in the making, Weald and Downland's new funded facilities are open to the public

A number of special guests and staff, including Downton Abbey actor and local resident Hugh Bonneville, celebrated the opening of the Weald and Downland Living Museum's newly completed Gateway Project on Thursday.

The new facilities all form a modern entrance to the museum, which houses 'living' examples of traditional buildings from across the South East.

The unveiling of the buildings marks the completion of the project that has been a decade in the making.

The project was awarded £4million of National Lottery funding in 2014, to transform the visitor experience by making the museum more welcoming, and creating better learning opportunities for volunteers, trainees and visitors.

[quote=Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East England]"Thanks to National Lottery players, a whole range of new facilities will now provide a wonderful resource for people to learn more about the architecture on display and the people who inhabited it."[/quote]

First opened in 1970, the museum houses vernacular buildings from across South East England, representing 950 years of English rural architecture. These buildings have been saved from being demolished or simply falling down and carefully dismantled, conserved, and painstakingly rebuilt at the museum's 40 acre site in the South Downs.

The museum preserves not just buildings but skills and crafts, with a working watermill, Tudor kitchen and Victorian blacksmiths among its 'living' displays.

The brand new galleries tell these stories more clearly than ever before, showcasing the museum's fascinating collection of historical tools that previously were unable to be displayed.

The buildings, echo elements from many of Weald and Downland's rural farm complexes, clad in local materials including hand-crafted sweet chestnut shakes.

Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East, said: "The Weald and Downland Living Museum represents an important part of the South East's rural heritage with a number of its rescued buildings the only surviving examples of their type. It also does award-winning work preserving traditional skills, ensuring they are passed onto future generations. Thanks to National Lottery players, a whole range of new facilities will now provide a wonderful resource for people to learn more about the architecture on display and the people who inhabited it."

The new buildings are open now. Visit the [Weald and Downland website](#) for more information.