Rockpooling on the beach where Mary Anning made her discoveries

Lyme Regis Museum is set to open its much-awaited Mary Anning Wing, thanks to National Lottery players.

On Monday 17 July, a new interactive fossil gallery, learning centre and improved visitor facilities will open to the public.

Thanks to National Lottery players and volunteers

Made possible by a £798,000 National Lottery grant, and the hard work of fundraisers and volunteers, the project has also revamped the existing museum building which was built more than a century ago.

Nerys Watts, Head of HLF South West, said: "Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, the new Mary Anning Wing provides fossil enthusiasts and fossil novices alike a gateway into the inspiring story of its namesake and the museum's fascinating collections."

A window into the past

"Lyme Regis is the birthplace of the science of palaeontology, and our museum is built on the site of the home of the world's first, and greatest fossil hunter, Mary Anning" said Museum Director David Tucker.

[quote= Nerys Watts, Head of HLF South West] "Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, the new Mary Anning Wing provides fossil enthusiasts and fossil novices alike a gateway into the inspiring story of its namesake." [/quote]

Mary Anning's legacy, and our enduring fascination for fossils, is a key element of the new wing which will house a spectacular collection of local fossils and others on loan from other museums. The wing will also offer magnificent views over Lyme Bay and the same beaches that Mary Anning walked on 200 years ago – on which the museum runs fossil walks for visitors.

Of course, it is not the only story to be told. The museum also reveals more about:

- Its famous writers, including Jane Austen and John Fowles
- The Monmouth Rebellion which was the last attempted invasion of England
- Lyme's 'greatest citizen' Thomas Coran who was the founder of the Foundlings Hospital, England's first charity.

Nerys Watts added: "Home of geological and charitable 'firsts', the inspiration of literary greats and the place to go for generations of people fascinated by fossils, Lyme Regis has an extraordinarily rich heritage. We look forward to the grand reopening!"

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Future fossil hunters? Leweston schoolchildren rockpooling at Lyme

Lyme Regis Museum secures National Lottery investment