David Livingstone’s birthplace starts new adventure



David Livingstone's Great Great Grandson Neil Wilson and school children

Described as 'Africa’s first freedom fighter', David Livingstone is of immense international importance in terms of his contribution to science, exploration, faith and humanitarianism yet he remains largely unrecognised in Scotland. That’s set to change with £6million investment to transform his birthplace into a leading tourist attraction appealing to visitors from across the world. Today the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) announced £4.1m support for the project and the Scottish Government announced an investment of £1.375m. Historic Environment Scotland has committed £575,000.

Born in 1813 in a cramped mill home in Blantyre, David Livingstone started his working life aged ten with 12-hour shifts in the cotton factory. However, his zest for education, passion for exploration and his deep faith led him to Christian missionary work and 30 years’ exploring southern, central, and eastern Africa, often in places where no European had previously ventured. His discoveries—geographic, technical, medical, and social—provided a complex body of knowledge that is still being studied today. The respect he gained from African chiefs opened the door to missionaries who introduced education and health to the local people, it inspired abolitionists of the slave trade, and influenced Western attitudes towards Africa.

With the help of HLF support, his birthplace will be redeveloped to provide a vibrant new museum setting Scotland in a global context and celebrating the inspirational story of how a poor millworker became one of the most popular British heroes of the Victorian era and a hero of Africa today. The interpretation of around 3,000 internationally significant

artefacts will be modernised and visitor facilities such as the café and shop upgraded. Through learning and engagement programmes the museum will become a centre for research and will support community regeneration and international development.

Commenting, Head of HLF Scotland, Lucy Casot, said: “The life of David Livingstone is both incredible and inspirational yet his pioneering work is recognised more in Africa than it is in Scotland where he was born. In the Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology, it’s timely that, thanks to National Lottery players, David Livingstone’s birthplace is set to become a valuable education resource and world tourist
destination.”

International Development Minister Alasdair Allan said: “David Livingstone remains to this day a deeply inspirational and iconic figure to many people here in Scotland, in Africa and across the world. Principles of global humanitarianism and solidarity lay behind much of his work.

“The reinvigoration of these historic buildings and surrounding grounds, aided by the Scottish Government’s £1.375m funding, will create new spaces and opportunities for people to learn about the important legacy of one of Scotland’s national heroes. It is highly appropriate that the project gets underway during this, our Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology.

“The other partners, HLF, Historic Environment Scotland, Scotland Malawi Partnership and South Lanarkshire Council are to be congratulated for working with the David Livingstone Trust to support this exciting project.”

The Chair of the David Livingstone Trust, Dr Isabel Bruce, said: “We are delighted with this announcement of funding. The Birthplace Project will re-ignite the powerful story of David Livingstone for new generations and further strengthen the world wide connections that Livingstone, his principles and legacy have inspired not just locally but globally. The Centre will become a key resource for learning about his heritage and his far reaching impact in - science, health, exploration, faith and humanitarian endeavour. Visitors will travel from all corners of the globe to explore his story and we believe will become a part of Livingstone's living legacy through this transformative project, that will ensure that David Livingstone's impact continues to be felt locally, nationally and internationally for future generations.”

Notes to Editors

HLF is a main partner in 2017’s Year of History Heritage & Archaeology. The Scotland-wide celebration will shine a spotlight on the country’s fascinating past with exciting events, attractions and activities for everyone.

Further information

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- For images taken of the grant announcements being made at the David Livingstone Birthplace, please contact Jeff Holmes on 07802 610085 (jeff@jshpix.co)