

Sutton Hoo to be transformed with a £1.8million National Lottery grant

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Sutton Hoo National Trust

Home to the burial ground of the Anglo-Saxon King Raedwald, Sutton Hoo near Woodbridge in Suffolk has been fascinating visitors from around the world ever since its hoard of treasure and royal secrets were discovered by a local archaeologist in 1939.

Now, thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, the National Trust can move ahead with plans to transform the experience of visitors and help them discover more about the people who settled here and those who went on to lead the archaeological digs that uncovered the world famous finds, including the Sutton Hoo helmet.

The news of the successful grant bid follows two years of planning and the funds will go towards the total project cost of £4m.

Plans include building a 17 metre observation tower to give views over the entire burial ground and to the River Deben beyond, revealing the fascinating story of this evocative landscape. It was from the River Deben that an Anglo-Saxon ship was hauled up the valley before it formed the burial chamber found in Mound One, where the famous treasure was discovered by Suffolk archaeologist Basil Brown.

A new route around the site will allow visitors to walk in the steps of the Anglo Saxons. Tranmer House, the former home of Edith Pretty who instigated the dig that would lead to the discoveries, will be transformed with a new exhibition exploring a timeline of multiple discoveries and the ongoing research at this and other archaeological sites.

Enhanced guided tours, thought-provoking activities and installations, innovative interpretation and creative programming will all sit alongside a schools education programme.

In addition, partnership working with archaeological bodies, the British Museum and the local community will all help to help bring both the landscape and Exhibition Hall to life.

The project, Releasing the Story of Sutton Hoo, will enable the National Trust to create an experience that helps visitors discover more about this internationally significant site and how its stories have captured the imaginations of people the world over.

Allison Girling, Property Operations Manager at Sutton Hoo, said: "We welcome visitors with a wide range of interests and knowledge to Sutton Hoo and these plans are all about sharing more about the history of this special place, helping visitors delve deeper into the lives of the Anglo-Saxons who settled here, the people who discovered them and to learn more about what it is that makes Sutton Hoo so fascinating.

"From why the Anglo-Saxons chose to bury their king here and how their lives and traditions have influenced English culture for generations, to how the determination of one remarkable woman led to the discoveries in the first place, there are so many stories to tell at Sutton Hoo and thanks to National Lottery players who make these grants possible, we'll be able to move forward with our plans."

Allison added: "We've been working with Sutton Hoo's teams of staff and volunteers, regular visitors and supporters, the local community and the National Lottery to shape the future for Sutton Hoo and together we want to create an experience that really brings history to life whether you're visiting for a family day out, to discover what's on your doorstep or to support academic research."

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of HLF East of England, said: "Sutton Hoo is an incredibly significant treasure trove of Anglo-Saxon heritage and it's exciting that thanks to National Lottery players, this fascinating site will be transformed for visitors from near and far. This is a great opportunity to share this amazing place and put people of all ages at the heart of a story which spans 6,000 years."

The Trust has also been given permission for plans to transform the welcome centre and car park.

The £4m project is being made possible thanks in part to support provided by members and visitors and the National Trust is aiming to raise a further £560,000 in order to complete the project.

The project is scheduled for completion in 2021.

Notes to Editors

About the National Trust

The National Trust is a conservation charity founded in 1895 by three people who saw the importance of our nation's heritage and open spaces, and wanted to preserve them for everyone to enjoy. More than 120 years later, these values are still at the heart of everything the charity does. Entirely independent of government, the National Trust looks after more than 250,000 hectares of countryside, 775 miles of coastline and hundreds of special places across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. More than 20 million people visit every year, and together with 4.5 million members and over 62,000 volunteers, they help to support the charity in its work to care for special places forever, for everyone. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

About Sutton Hoo

Sutton Hoo, near Woodbridge in Suffolk, is one of the most important archaeological sites in the world and the 7th-century burial mounds, excavated from the late 1930s onwards, have revealed items including the iconic Sutton Hoo helmet that have helped shape our understanding of the origins of English history.

The landscape has been cared for by the National Trust since 1998.

Further information

For further media information and to arrange interviews and photographs please contact: Helen Johns – helen.johns@nationaltrust.org.uk 01284 747558 / 07702 640758