

A map showing the geographical spread of dialect words

A National Lottery grant is allowing the University of Leeds to update the most comprehensive survey of the dialects of England ever undertaken.

The Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture (LAVC) contains records and artefacts relating to more than 300 English dialects, traditions and lifestyles of their speakers. They were collected through some of the most extensive and detailed dialect work ever undertaken, including the Survey of English Dialects which was conducted between 1946 and 1978.

Now, thanks to a National Lottery grant, the archive will be opened up to the public, and that work will resume. The project has been awarded £65,000 by HLF, and is in line for a full grant of £798,000.

The LAVC holds audio recordings, photographs, newspaper cuttings, hand-drawn diagrams of tools and farming devices, pronunciations for thousands of dialectal terms, and word maps tracking boundaries for the use of different words.

The four-year Dialect and Heritage: the State of the Nation project, will make the contents of the archive publicly available online, and work with partner museums across England to display parts of the archive in the regions to which they are relevant for the first time. They will incorporate the archive content into their existing displays about rural English life.

[quote=Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive of HLF]"The way in which people use local variations of the English Language around the country is a fascinating but very fragile part of our heritage."[/quote]

The partner museums are:

- Avoncroft Museum in Bromsgrove, Worcestershire
- Dales Countryside Museum in Hawes, North Yorkshire
- Ryedale Folk Museum in Hutton-le-Hole, North Yorkshire
- Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket, Suffolk
- Weald and Downland Living Museum in Chichester, West Sussex

The project will also continue the work begun by Harold Orton and Eugen Dieth in the 1940s, recording present-day dialects, memories and cultural information from descendants of participants in the original survey.

Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive of HLF, said: “The way in which people use local variations of the English Language around the country is a fascinating but very fragile part of our heritage. Dialect and Heritage: the State of the Nation will help to capture, preserve and share those variations. thanks to National Lottery players. As they say in my part of the world, it'll be gurt brilliant."

The Dialect and Heritage: the State of the Nation project will begin development work early next year. The project would like to hear from descendants of those involved in the original Survey of English Dialects.



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The Taakin Heeds team in action



ge heritage

The LearnPlay Foundation team

Lottery grant is smashin’ news for Black Country longwidge!