Record Numbers Delve into Heritage to Celebrate



A family group in Iron Age dress in the doorway of the round House

This is Scotland’s Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology and newly-released figures show that communities around Scotland have risen to the challenge of exploring and celebrating their roots, many for the first time.

According to HLF, 460 community groups have taken the opportunity to get hands on with the stories, traditions, industries and landscape which surround them thanks to funding from the National Lottery. From Unst in Shetland to Whithorn in Dumfries and Galloway, 98 projects dotted across the country have inspired people of all ages to investigate, preserve and share the heritage on their doorstep.

In Whithorn, young people have turned their hand to Iron Age interior design, exploring how their ancestors would have lived in a Roundhouse, from the furniture they sat on to the music they danced to. Hundreds of children have used the Roundhouse as a prehistoric classroom to experience life in 450BC. The Roundhouse has been reconstructed using detail from an archaeological discovery of an incredibly well-preserved roundhouse under the peat nearby.

Julia Muir-Watt, Development Manager at The Whithorn Trust, said: “The Whithorn Trust applied to HLF because it wanted to be part of the celebrations of the Year of Heritage, History and Archaeology - that's very important to us, as archaeologists have been investigating Whithorn's history for the last 130 years - and still are!

“We wanted to involve young people and children, and make the most of our new Iron Age roundhouse, and this was a programme which fitted our plans. Fun events, with a serious archaeological basis, are showing how 2,500 years ago, people decorated themselves, their homes, and enjoyed cooking and entertainment around the fire with their extended families.

“Visitors, families and especially local schools and the nursery, have really enjoyed comparing and contrasting how similar we are while exploring some of the differences.”

Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs, said: “Hundreds of community groups across Scotland have embraced the Stories, Stones and Bones programme. It underlines Scotland’s place as a nation with rich history, heritage and impressive archaeology.

“I welcome HLF's engagement and funding in the Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology. It has generated huge interest and captured the imagination of community-based projects that wish to celebrate their own local heritage.”

As a key partner to the Year of History Heritage and Archaeology, HLF has awarded over £852,000 funding to the 98 projects through its dedicated Stories Stones and Bones programme. Over half the applications were from people motivated to explore heritage for the very first time.

A 2,000-year old cold case is being explored at what was the largest and most powerful Roman Fort in Scotland, Trimontium near Melrose. Using forensics excavated at the site over 100 years ago, a ‘citizen jury’ of teenagers will give their verdict on what lay behind the discovery of several bodies in a pit, a mystery which continues to baffle historians and archaeologists.

An outdoor classroom in the beautiful Glen Strathfarrar near Beauly has welcomed 400 children from urban schools to learn about the Sheiling way of life in the Highlands. They got stuck into the mud as they learn the traditional skills of cutting and building with turf helping to construct a livestock pen for the Sheiling. They will also hear the stories and understand the place names associated with this traditional way of life.

Lucy Casot, Head of HLF in Scotland, said: “We are very excited about Stories, Stones and Bones and have been overwhelmed by the interest it has had from people wanting to explore what’s important to them and their community. It’s been a real opportunity to open the door to those that don’t normally get involved in heritage, particularly young people, and let them see what it has to offer. I’m delighted that, thanks to players of The National Lottery, so many people are involved in celebrating this special year in Scotland.”

Notes to Editors

Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. www.hlf.org.uk. Follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and use #HLFsupported.

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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2017 Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology

2017 is the year to delve into the past and discover Scotland's fascinating stories through a wide-ranging variety of new and existing activity to drive the nation's tourism and events sector, boosting tourism across Scotland.

The Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology began on 1 January 2017 and will end on 31 December 2017. It builds on the momentum generated by previous themed years in Scotland including the 2015 Year of Food and Drink, Homecoming Scotland 2014, the Year of Creative and the Year of Natural.

The Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology is a Scottish Government initiative being led by VisitScotland, and supported by a variety of partners including Creative Scotland, Scottish Tourism Alliance, Scottish Enterprise, The National Trust for Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Built Environment Forum Scotland, HLF, Museums Galleries Scotland and Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland.

The Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology is supported by £570,000 of Scottish Government funding.

The Year of History, Heritage and Archaeology events fund is managed by EventScotland, part of VisitScotland's Events Directorate.

For more information visit www.visitscotland.com/HHA2017 or join the conversation at #HHA2017