

Old Black Lion pub

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has announced a grant of £1,666,300 to repair and refurbish the Old Black Lion, linking it to the Grade I listed St Peter's Church and surrounding medieval and Saxon heritage, promoting a new 'Heritage Gateway' to Northampton. It is one of the first buildings to be awarded funding through HLF's new Heritage Enterprise scheme.

St Peter's Church dates from the 12th century, and the Old Black Lion Pub is a 17th century inn that claims to be the oldest pub in Northampton. Originally the Plasters Arms, the pub was burnt down in the great Northampton fire of 1675 and restored as the Old Black Lion in 1720.

Led by the Churches Conservation Trust, the project aims to breathe new life into both buildings, enhancing the area's tourism offer. The pub's outbuildings will become a heritage visitor centre, creating new conference and meeting facilities, whilst the redeveloped pub building will become a pub-restaurant with a more sustainable business model. Sympathetic landscaping will also be carried out to improve the areas attraction.

As a result of HLF's investment, the project will potentially create 26 FTE jobs. The pub is currently failing and anti-social behaviour has provided a poor first impression of the town. The amalgamation of the site into one ownership as part of Northampton's Gateway will be a catalyst for regeneration, attracting investment and jobs to the neighbouring Innovation Centre and surrounding Enterprise Zone.

The project is a partnership between the Churches Conservation Trust, Northamptonshire County Council, Northampton Borough Council, the Friends of Northampton Castle and the Friends of St Peter's and All Saints Church. The project will also seek a commercial partner to run the pub-restaurant operation.

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of HLF, said: "In almost every town and city there is at least one historic building standing empty that at one time was at the heart of the local community. Whilst much-loved, these buildings present huge financial challenges. This new scheme works to unlock the potential of these precious old buildings, encouraging private investors and encouraging regeneration. The result is good for us all – substantial economic growth, much-needed new jobs and a wonderful part of our heritage saved from further neglect."

Heritage Enterprise addresses 'market failure' – where buildings have previously failed to attract investment or realise their commercial potential because the cost of repair has meant that – until now – they were not commercially viable. The Lottery investment announced today bridges that financial gap. It will specifically help fund vital repairs and conservation works to historic buildings, converting them into safe, usable and inspirational spaces for new businesses. By doing so, this Lottery grant will help remove one of the key obstacles currently standing in the way of regeneration by transforming neglected buildings into productive enterprises that will create local jobs and generate wealth.

Heritage Enterprise launched with the publication of the first ever comprehensive analysis of how businesses across the UK use historic buildings. *New ideas need old buildings* revealed the positive impact historic buildings have on the UK's economy and their proven ability to contribute to growth. The key findings of the analysis demonstrated a commercial business based in a historic building generates more wealth than is the average for the UK economy as a whole.

Jenny Abramsky added, "Our research was incredibly revealing. The important role heritage plays in creating a strong sense of identity and place is well known. However, these new findings demonstrated for the first time the role heritage buildings play in economic development."

For more information about Heritage Enterprise visit Heritage Enterprise programme page, Twitter: #heritageenterprise.

Notes to editors

New ideas need old buildings
This research was commissioned by the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage. The analysis of business use within listed buildings was undertaken by Colliers International, using data supplied by ProMap, with further work on economic impacts undertaken by Oxford Economics. The market research survey of businesses occupying listed buildings was carried out by Spirul Research. HLF is also grateful to Historic Scotland, Cadw and Dept Environment Northern Ireland for supplying data on listed buildings.

The research was carried out in five steps

- Establishing the types of businesses that occupy a large sample of listed buildings in 62 towns and cities across the UK.
- Comparing these uses with the pattern of use within non-listed buildings – both across the UK and within each of the sample places. This gave us our key measure used in the analysis – the 'propensity to occupy' indicator. This compares the frequency that listed buildings are occupied by different types of business, with the frequency in non-listed buildings.
- Using reasonable assumptions to aggregate up from this sample to give estimates of the total number of different types of business occupying all listed buildings.

- Using economic data on business classification to generate estimates of the total output and employment that is generated by businesses occupying listed building.
- Undertaking a telephone survey of over 200 businesses in listed buildings in 15 different locations showed why the patterns of use described above materialise.

Heritage Enterprise applications are assessed in two rounds. A first-round pass is given when HLF has endorsed outline proposals and earmarked funding. A first-round pass may also include an immediate award to fund the development of the project. Detailed proposals are then considered by HLF at second-round and as long as plans have progressed satisfactorily and according to the original proposal, an award for the project is confirmed.

FTE – Full-time equivalent jobs created, based on applicant estimations.

Further information

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