Accrington Town Centre and the Pals Centenary THI secures support

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The project aims to transform the declining historic retail and commercial gateway into the town centre, along Blackburn Road, culminating in a public realm scheme outside Accrington Town Hall and Market Hall to commemorate the Accrington Pals and the Battle of the Somme. The scheme will last for 5 years from 2014 and over the next 12 months the council will be working with property owners along Blackburn Road to identify the improvements that will be undertaken and will be commissioning architects to design the public realm scheme. The council is investing an additional £500,000 into the scheme.

Development funding of £25,000 has also been awarded to help the council progress their plans and over the next 12 months the council will be fine-tuning the proposals and undertaking initial surveys and estimates.

Accrington is a town with a strong and proud heritage and its fine legacy of mid to late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings are key to its distinct identity. Building repairs, shopfront restorations and the regeneration of vacant and underused floorspace will enhance the town's key shopping corridor, create a strong backbone of regeneration and support recent and planned investments in the town centre. Together these works will improve the town centre's economic vitality and viability, complementing the development of Accrington Railway Station, the proposed bus station and the transformation of Accrington Market Hall.

David Welsby, Chief Executive of Hyndburn Borough Council, said: “The Council is committed to securing the future of Accrington Town Centre and this initiative will see the improvement of many attractive buildings along one of its arterial routes and the development of a public realm scheme that will commemorate the Accrington Pals. Recognising that the square is in the heart of Accrington, the Council will be working with local people and a variety of organisations, including the Duke of Lancaster’s Regiment, to ensure that these works provide a fitting remembrance of those from the Pals that lost their lives during the First World War.”

As part of the initiative, the council will be working with the local community to help raise awareness of the towns heritage assets. There will be opportunities for students from Accrington and Rossendale College to learn from the repair and restoration of historic buildings and working with the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, a variety of community activities will be held to coincide with the recently announced programme of national commemorations of the First World War.

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said “Accrington is a typical Pennine Lancashire town and it would be a real loss if its distinctive character disappeared. By awarding our initial support and some immediate development funding, Hyndburn Borough Council will be able to start progressing plans to reinvigorate the area. We particularly welcome the proposals around commemorating the Accrington Pals within the public square, leaving a lasting legacy from this vital chapter in the town’s history.”

Notes to editors

An HLF Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) first-round pass means that money has been set aside by HLF. The applicants can then progress to the second round and send a detailed second-round submission to secure the full award. This early level of strong financial commitment means that THIs can build strong partnerships with the assurance that funding for their scheme is in place provided their final proposals fully meet the programme criteria.

THIs encourage partnerships of local organisations to carry out repairs and other works to a number of historic buildings, structures or spaces. Grants currently range from £500,000 to £2m.

From April 2013, the programme will be known as Townscape Heritage with grants available from £100,000 up to £2m. The next application deadline is 31 August 2013 with decisions being made in January 2014. The new programme which was launched on 25 March.

To date, HLF has invested over £214m regenerating towns that have suffered serious social and economic decline.