Heritage Lottery Funds £365,000 investment to help us delve into our colourful past

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Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is announcing 46 successful projects in the East Midlands which will be receiving a total investment of nearly £365,000 to help people explore their community's heritage, through its All Our Stories programme[1].

This grant programme – developed to coincide with BBC Two's history series, The Great British Story: A People's History - aims to get thousands more people across the UK involved in exploring the local history, customs and traditions that are important to them.

And now, people in Nottingham will benefit from small grants that will help them to find out more about their own local heritage – often complex, sometimes quirky but always fascinating – at a truly grass roots level. A kaleidoscope of unusual stories of communities is already emerging, such as why Nottingham is synonymous with bicycles, and the experiences of organisations providing key support and services to BME communities in the last 60 years.

'FLAT' is among the 46 in the East Midlands and 542 successful projects UK-wide being announced today. Five tower blocks in Lenton, Nottingham are earmarked for demolition. Young film-maker Sam Derby-Cooper wants to record and document in a film, the residents' experiences and memories before the high-rise community is broken up for good. The project will focus on the daily lives of five residents, including Anne Gallagher, who moved into her flat on the 11th floor in 1987.

Anne has seen the good and the bad of high-rise living: "Tower blocks breed isolation and loneliness and it's time for them to come down," she says. "But for many residents it was their first home; some back in the 1960s when they were new and futuristic with under-floor heating and fabulous views, and for others more recently who moved in after being homeless for years."

Also awarded was The Raleigh – a history of an iconic Nottingham factory: this project, inspired by the runaway success of a community theatre project, will gather the memories and visual material of ex-employees of the iconic Raleigh Bicycles factory so they can be shared by the wider community. Memories such as trialling the first-ever Chopper around Nottingham; spotting themselves in the 1960 film Saturday Night, Sunday Morning, filmed at the factory, and works outings to Blackpool that filled 16 trains.

'We wanted something lasting to come out of the original theatre project,' says Andy Barrett, one half of community theatre company Hanby & Barrett. 'The incredible response made us realise that we needed a permanent archive to collect and tell these wonderful stories.'

All Our Stories, launched in April, was so popular that HLF has quadrupled the amount it had originally set aside for projects. Grants ranging from £3,000 up to £10,000 have been granted to all sorts of organisations, from small community groups, residents' associations and local history groups to larger heritage organisations and charities. The grants will bring communities together to explore the past, as well as providing those people the skills and expert advice - delivered by top academics - to delve into their local community's history in a lasting and well-informed way.

Historian Michael Wood presented The Great British Story which was broadcast earlier this year, and encouraged people to get more personally involved with the heritage in their own backyard. He said: “We British love our history, and no wonder: few nations in the world, if any, have such riches on their doorstep, and so much of it accessible to all of us. It is fantastic that so many people have been inspired to get involved, both from The Great British Story series, and HLF’s All Our Stories. Thanks to lottery players people can now dig deeper into their own past and I’m certain many surprising stories will be uncovered which will not only bring to life the excitement of local history, but will illuminate every community’s connection with the national narrative.”

Emma Sayer, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands said: “It’s often amazing what people don’t know about where they live. We have been bowled over by the response to All Our Stories and the great news is that we have been able to find the money to support so many fascinating projects such as The Raleigh, FLAT and BME Community Support Stories and so many others. We’re looking forward to hearing more about the colourful stories that emerge; they will create a unique picture of Nottingham, the East Midlands and these islands as a whole at an important time in our history.”

Other successful applicants today in include:

- BME Community Support Stories - This project seeks to capture the experiences of BME organisations going back 60 years that provided key support and services to BME communities in Nottingham
- Remembering Wartime Thoresby - Vivid stories abound about the military’s requisitioning of Thoresby Park during the Second World War
- Leicester & Leicestershire Irish Forum - stories of the travelling communities over hundreds of years, fact, fiction and folklore that became part of Traveller and Gypsy culture
- Pomegranate Playwriting Group - 12 writers and 14 to19 year olds from Pomegranate Youth Theatre record experiences of workers of the former Trebor sweet factory in Chesterfield
- Changing Spaces, Trading Places - This project explores the cross cultural and inter-generational legacy of forced and economic migration in Leicestershire.

To support All Our Stories, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) is providing funding so that projects can work closely with universities and benefit from the professional support of heritage experts. The AHRC funding will be encouraging early career researchers to work with community groups to share and develop their research skills. HLF will also be commissioning the Media Trust to help projects create a new type of digital record of the work they do.

Although the All Our Stories programme is now closed to further applications, HLF will be launching a new £3,000 - £10,000 community heritage grants programme, ‘Sharing Heritage’, in February 2013. It will use a similar, simple to access application process and will also be designed to reach new applicants working at grass roots.

Notes to editors

- HLF has awarded £364,700 to 46 projects across the East Midlands
- All Our Stories was developed in response to HLF’s Strategic Framework consultation with the public and heritage sector which encouraged HLF to make applying for funding simpler and easier for first time applicants and community groups.
- All Our Stories featured in five BBC Learning events at flagship heritage locations and regional events across the UK which ran in tandem with The Great British Story: A People’s History TV series to get people involved with their local heritage. These events provided opportunities for people to discover their place in history, learn about their surnames and uncover the history of their local area.

- The funding has been made available through the AHRC's Connected Communities programme whose aim is to understand through research the changing nature of communities and the role of communities in sustaining and enhancing our quality of life.
- The NCCPE support universities to engage with the public. It works with all the beacons to promote best practice in public engagement and provide a single point of contact for the whole higher education sector. The NCCPE also works strategically with key national partners to help develop work across the higher education sector.
- The Media Trust believes in the power of media to change lives. It works with the media industry to empower charities and communities to have a voice and be heard. This is achieved by providing communications skills and resources, helping access audiences, and harnessing creative industry talent. For more information visit Media Trust's website, or follow on Twitter @Media_Trust
- The National Lottery: Lottery funding has been changing people's lives for 18 years - 19 November is the National Lottery's 18th birthday. Every week National Lottery players raise over £30 million. From funding our Olympic and Paralympic athletes to grass roots sport, the National Lottery has invested in museums and galleries, local parks, artists, theatres, film, charities and local communities. National Lottery Good Causes' website

Project contacts:

The Raleigh – a history of an iconic Nottingham factory: Andy Barrett: 07986 594 395, email: barrettscrivener@gmail.com

FLAT - recording the demolition of Lenton flats: Sam Derby-Cooper: 07833 466 570, email: sderbycooper@yahoo.co.uk

Further information

HLF press office: Robert Smith on 0207 591 6245.

Images and further project examples are available on request.