Heritage Lottery Fund’s £642,400 investment to help us delve into our colourful past

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Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is announcing 70 successful projects in London which will be receiving a total investment of £642,400 to help people explore their community’s heritage, through its All Our Stories programme.

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 London 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 what North Paddington cuisine and architecture reveals about the area’s community.

The Cultural Heritage of North Paddington is one of 70 regional projects out of a total of 542 successful projects awarded a total of £4.5million across the UK today. Young people and over-fifties residents will be exploring the culture and the environment of the Queen’s Park area with a special emphasis on food and architecture.

“There are plenty of restaurants and shops selling ethnic food and this is a good starting point for the kids to look at this multi-cultural area,” says Steve Shaw for Paddington Arts which is running the project with the help of an £8,600 All Our Stories grant.

A study of architectural styles from Victorian social housing to the present day will also help create a picture of the area’s development. The local stories revealed by the research groups of all ages will be illustrated by comparing historic and present day photographs, producing a video and mounting an exhibition. Support will come from University College London and Westminster Archives.
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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 with 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.”

Sue Bowers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, 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. We’re looking forward to hearing more about the colourful stories that emerge; they will create a unique picture of London and these islands as a whole at an important time in our history.”

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

- 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 was 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.

Further information

HLF press office: Vicky Wilford on 020 7591 6046. Images and further project examples are available on request.