Heritage Lottery Fund’s £369,900 investment to help us delve into our colourful past

23/11/2012

Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is announcing 44 successful projects in the South East which will be receiving a total investment of £369,900 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 the South East 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 a teenager’s wartime memories of Chichester to the importance of woodland to past generations.

WWII Video Education Project is one of 44 South East regional projects out of a total of 542 successful projects awarded a total of £4.5million across the UK today. The discovery of a teenager’s diary recording the summer of 1940 around Chichester Harbour sparked a desire to involve local college students in telling a personal story from the Second World War. Staff and students at Havant College jumped at the chance to work with the Chichester Harbour Conservancy on the film project to uncover and tell stories from the wartime years. The project has been awarded a £6,600 All Our Stories grant.

“We have a vibrant education department but this is really something quite new and exciting,” said the Conservancy’s Alison Beckett. “It will be a young person from the past talking to today’s young people about life in wartime. We will show the film to local schools and also at events with older people in the hope of jogging other peoples’ memories.”

Contact: Alison Beckett 01243 510 984

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.”

Stuart McLeod, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for South East England, 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 wartime tales and woodland folklore. We’re looking forward to hearing more about the colourful stories that emerge; they will create a unique picture of We’re looking forward to hearing more about the colourful stories that emerge; they will create a unique picture of the South East and these islands as a whole at an important time in our history.”

Other successful applicants today in Sussex include:
• Trees and People - Lewes
• Peacehaven’s Pioneers - Peacehaven
• The history of Lower Bevendean Farm - Brighton
• Storrington’s Old School

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 Trust4 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 the Media Trust website or follow on Twitter @Media_Trust

Project examples

• Trees and People - Lewes. This explores the heritage of our relationship with local woods and trees through stories. Older people's stories about trees in our community will be gathered. Memories of their personal experiences including how they were used for crafts and food. Folklore and traditional stories around local native trees will be researched.

Contact: Helen Thoms 01323 811 095.

• Peacehaven Pioneers – Peacehaven. The project will develop a community history group with older people including those who have recently come to Downlands Court, an older people's housing scheme in Peacehaven, East Sussex. Peacehaven is itself recent, first developed in 1916. We will explore people’s oral histories about arriving here and their childhoods in other places.

Contact: Mike Noble 01273 584 638.

• The history of Lower Bevendean Farm – Brighton. Lower Bevendean is a post WW2 housing development on the north-eastern fringe of Brighton. Previously, it was a typical Sussex Downland farm of the same name. This project is about engaging the local community in preparing and delivering a history of the land using the still-discernible relics and artefacts of the former farm and archive materials, photographic archives, historic OS maps.

Contact: John Horsfield 07903 713 382.

• Storrington’s Old School – Storrington and District Museum Society's aim is to enhance our skills to undertake research into the history of the old school. Through this research, talks, workshops, displays and exhibitions we will engage with and inspire others to become involved in learning more about our past.

Contact: Shaaron Collet 01903 741 433.

The National Lottery
Lottery funding has been changing people’s lives for 18 years - 19th 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. To find out more visit the National Lottery website.

Further information

Phil Cooper, HLF Press Office on 07889 949 173.