Heritage Lottery Fund’s £254,400 investment to help us delve into our colourful past

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Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is announcing 29 successful projects in the West Midlands which will be receiving a total investment of £254,400 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 Stoke-on-Trent 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 charting the Potteries from past to present and uncovering the heritage of an 18th-century windmill.

The Potteries Tile Trail is one of 29 regional projects out of a total of 542 successful projects awarded a total of £4.5million across the UK today. The Potteries project, led by the national Tiles & Architectural Ceramics Society, will bring the story of the ceramics industry up to present day production and emerging creative start-ups. A twelve-strong team of ambassadors will explore Stoke’s history of tile-making and architectural ceramics in local and national museums and archives and manufacturers.

Archive material, film footage and first-hand testimonies will be presented in a roadshow that will visit each of the six Potteries towns. A legacy publication and website will offer self-guided tours.

“We want to recruit local ambassadors, especially young people who will inspire more pride and passion in the Potteries,” says project co-ordinator Danny Callaghan: “Their research, skills and energy could have a big impact on this great city and its future.”
Contact: Danny Callaghan 07999 350 176

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."

Reyahn King, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund West 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 from ceramics manufacture to a celebrated windmill. We're looking forward to hearing more about the stories that emerge; they will create a unique picture of the West Midlands and these islands as a whole at an important time in our history."

Other successful applicants today in Stoke-on-Trent include:

- Behold A Giant, The story of a windmill, Stoke-on-Trent
- People's Park Tours, Stoke-on-Trent

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 flaship 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.
- Behold A Giant The story of a windmill - Stoke-on-Trent. The project is to publish a book about the windmill and the local area of Meir Heath. The windmill is a Grade II listed building from 1775. The title of the book will be Behold A Giant The story of a Windmill
  Contact: Gill Swift 01782 317 521
- People's Park Tours - Stoke-on-Trent. This project – by Stoke-on-Trent City Council - will build upon users' memories of local heritage parks and develop them as learning resources to engage local schools and the wider

public. It will help to build an understanding of the hidden histories that make local parks such a special feature. Contact: Kay Grice 01782 232 546

- 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

Further information

Phil Cooper, HLF press office, on 07889 949 173.