Boost for ambitious archive project to preserve Peterborough’s history

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Funding is now secured for the two stages of the project enabling the organisations to embark on an ambitious three-year programme of theatre and archive work entitled Forty Years On. The Eastern Angles/Peterborough Archive Service led project will explore, archive and creatively interpret forty years of Peterborough history from 1968 to 2008.

An award of £160,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) will give local people the opportunity to investigate the history of Peterborough’s development and see it celebrated in a touring documentary show, whilst £60,000 awarded through Arts Council England’s ‘Grants for the arts’ scheme will support the creation of a new Community Play based on this research.

Over 100 Peterborough-based volunteers will be given the opportunity to take part in the Forty Years On project.

Thanks to the support of HLF, local volunteers will catalogue and conserve the archives of the Peterborough Development Corporation. Alongside this, the participants will be trained to collect over 150 oral histories from residents who moved to Peterborough during the city’s 40-year period of rapid expansion. Testimonials will also be gathered from Peterborough’s established immigrant groups and more recent arrivers from Eastern Europe.

These archives will form the basis of a fascinating documentary-style theatre production created and toured by Eastern Angles. This will explore the background to the planning and creation of Peterborough’s new townships. This play will be performed in five venues across Peterborough during Autumn 2012.

In the following year the interviews and further research will be turned into a Community Play, funded by the Arts Council grant, featuring up to a 100 community-performers culminating in a massive production in late 2013. The project will finish in spring 2014 with a completed and fully accessible archive and website with special features for school curriculum projects.

Peterborough MP Stewart Jackson said: "It's important that Peterborough's modern history of change and adaptation is recorded and preserved for scholars and local people. This grant will help protect that heritage for future generations and it's to be welcomed as an innovative way of recording the past."

Ivan Cutting, Artistic Director of Eastern Angles, said: “The wonderful thing about these grants is that they will enable us to unearth valuable material and give us the chance, through theatre productions, to explore, explain and celebrate forty years of extraordinary history…and everybody has the chance to be involved."

Anna Sexton, Peterborough Archives Service, said: “We are delighted that one of Peterborough’s most important modern archive collections is getting the attention that it deserves. We are excited about working alongside a large team of volunteers who will be helping us to enrich and promote the modern heritage of the City for the benefit of many generations to come.”

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: “The changing face of Peterborough over the last 40 years is an intrinsic part of local heritage and a real opportunity for residents - both young and old - to share their

stories. Combining theatre, online technology and archives, lottery player's money will enable local people to celebrate their own history in new and exciting ways."

Helen Lax, Arts Council Director, East said: “This is very good news, building on Eastern Angles previous work in the city and bringing alive the rich and diverse stories of Peterborough communities.”

Notes to editors

1) Using money raised through the National Lottery, the HLF sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 30,000 projects, allocating £4.5billion across the UK, including £290million to the East of England alone. Examples of other locally funded projects can found in the Our Projects section. If your group has an idea for a project and would like to discuss this, please ring 01223 224 870 and ask to speak to a member of the development team.

2) Grants for the arts, funded by the National Lottery, are for activities carried out over a set period and which engage people in England in arts activities, and help artists and arts organisations in England carry out their work. For more information on Grants for the arts visit the Arts Council website.

3) Eastern Angles is the regional touring theatre company for East Anglia. It has a reputation for producing high-quality, new writing with a regional flavour. Based at the Sir John Mills Theatre in Ipswich, the company has been touring professional theatre productions into the towns and villages of East Anglia for 29 years. Eastern Angles have also staged productions at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and at London’s Bush Theatre.

4) Peterborough Archive Service is based in the Central Library and is managed by Vivacity Culture and Leisure Trust, on behalf of Peterborough City Council. The service’s core provision is to provide information about, and access to, its archives and local studies collections. These collections range from 12th century charters to recent historic records including the Peterborough Development Corporation material. The service has a growing reputation as a centre for family history research and also runs a wide range of local history events, activities and projects based on its archive collections.

Further information

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