Argyll gets economic boost with £2.25m investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund

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The economic fortunes of two Argyll towns are set to be turned around thanks to funding announced today by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Rothesay has been earmarked funding of £1.5m and awarded development funding of £50,000 while Campbeltown received a grant of £700,000. The awards were made as part of HLF's hugely successful Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)**.

The Townscape Heritage Initiative is a unique approach to urban regeneration and sustainable development using heritage as the catalyst. Run down areas are regenerated by repairing and giving new uses to historic buildings, making them more appealing places to invest, work and live in. To date HLF has invested over £30million in 26 town centres across Scotland, levering many millions more in partnership funding and bringing real economic benefit to the towns as well as restoring community pride.

Rothesay
The most popular Scottish holiday resort of the 1930's, Rothesay on Bute was visited by tens of thousands of holidaymakers who travelled 'doon the watter' every year by paddle-steamer. However, changing holiday patterns and consistent depopulation has taken the shine off its Victorian seaside glamour. Dereliction and demolition has left prominent gap sites, raw gable ends and frontages in poor repair.

The THI focuses on the heart of the town, Guildford Square, adjacent to the Rothesay's medieval royal castle. Numerous regeneration projects will be undertaken to improve the area making it a more attractive place for visitors to stay.

Campbeltown
Campbeltown was set up by an act of Parliament in 1609 and was one of the most successful 'planted towns'. It thrived during the 19th century as an industrial town of some significance with successful shipbuilding, fishing and whisky industries, and in 1900 had the highest per capita income in Scotland. This prosperity is reflected in the many Edwardian and Victorian villas in the town.

Sadly, since the 1920's the town has been in decline through a combination of failing industry and its remoteness. It now suffers from unemployment levels which are twice the British average. The THI scheme includes the restoration of the Town Hall so that it can once again be a focus for community life and the derelict Old Schoolhouse which will be repaired and restored as a hostel for tourists.

Commenting from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Colin McLean, said: "Looking after our heritage is an incredibly effective way of supporting community life generally. This is recognised in today's Government strategy for improving quality of place. Serious investment like this goes well beyond looking after the bricks and mortar of a building, bringing with it substantial social and economic benefits too.

"Our research shows that these schemes can really help turn local economies around, not only by improving how run-down historic towns look and feel, but also by prompting business start-ups and creating new jobs. This investment

means that more town centres will enjoy the far-reaching benefits of this highly successful initiative.

“We are delighted to be able to work with Argyll and Bute Council in revitalising the historic core of Rothesay and Campbeltown. Today is a step towards a brighter future for these communities.”

Argyll and Bute Council Leader, Dick Walsh, said: “This is excellent news, not only for Campbeltown and Rothesay but for the whole of Argyll and Bute. This funding represents a huge boost to plans for the regeneration of our town centres and complements capital investments already made or earmarked for future developments.

“Against all the odds, the economic future of our area is looking positive, and the council’s decision to invest in that future during a time of recession is already beginning to bear fruit, attracting both public and private investment. Planning for the regeneration and development of our towns is now well underway and we are clear about what it is we are wanting to achieve and how we are going to achieve it.

“However, in planning for the future, the legacy of our architecture and its history must be preserved. Monies from the Heritage Lottery Fund will help us to ensure that the unique character of each of our towns is not lost.”

Councillor John Semple, Chair of the Campbeltown Town Centre and Waterfront Project Board, said: “I am extremely pleased that this award has been made to the Campbeltown Townscape Heritage Initiative. It recognises that Campbeltown is, quite rightly, a place of significant note in Scottish Cultural Heritage. It is also a tribute to the hard work of our Council Officers, particularly Fergus Murray and James Lafferty, and the community groups they worked with to make this bid a success.

“This is a very exciting time for Campbeltown and the entire Kintyre peninsula. This funding comes hard on the heels of recent announcements of significant investment in the area, both in terms of employment opportunities and improvements in local infrastructure.

“Campbeltown and the surrounding area is set to be transformed over the next few years, and I look forward to working with the local community and partner organisations in ensuring that we can all be proud of the results.”

Councillor Len Scoullar, Chair of the Rothesay Waterfront Project Board, said: “This is wonderful news not just for Rothesay residents but for the entire Bute community, which is of course 100% behind the plans to regenerate the town centre.

“I’d like to thank everyone whose effort and hard work have led to this announcement. To have secured a Stage One Pass gives everyone involved in this long-term project the confidence to go on and develop the plans further, in order to ensure that the town’s full potential can be realised.

“We have some wonderful historic buildings in Rothesay, and Guildford Square is right at the heart of them. It is very exciting that these former jewels in the town’s crown look set to be restored to their former glory, and we all look forward to ensuring that Rothesay regains its reputation as one of Scotland’s most beautiful - and most popular - visitor destinations.”

Notes to editors

*Today, the Government is launching its strategy for quality of place entitled 'World Class Places', laying out the key opportunities and challenges ahead. A joint initiative between CLG and DCMS departments, the report sets out the broad strategic objectives and actions that will be taken to improve quality of place. CABE is organising the event on

behalf of Government.

Contact Bianca Mathews if you wish to attend at bmathews@cabe.org.uk

** A Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) earmarked first-round pass means that money has been set aside by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the scheme in question. Competition at this stage is tough, and while it does not guarantee funding, it is an indication of positive support. The applicant can then progress to the second round and submit a further, fully-developed application to secure the full award. On occasion, development funding will also be awarded at the first round. This early level of strong financial commitment means that THI's can build strong partnerships with the assurance that funding for their scheme is in place provided their final proposals fully meet the programme criteria.