

Over the next five years the popular Living Museum that tells the story of everyday working life will be transformed, creating new ways for people to enjoy the heritage of the North East. The centrepiece will be a ‘new’ 1950s Town and Farm, filled with objects and buildings donated by local people to tell their story. Other innovations include a therapeutic day centre for people living with dementia in a block of Aged Miner’s Homes and overnight accommodation in museum exhibits. Museum bosses expect the new developments to attract around 100,000 more people to the region and create 95 jobs, as well as 50 opportunities for apprentices.

The development of the 1950s will ensure Beamish tells the story of a period still in living memory – just as was the case when the Living Museum was first founded back in the 1970s. Visitors will be able to explore the world of their grandparents – and note the huge changes to people’s lives in this decade of recovery – including the NHS, nationalisation of industry, social housing, leisure time / holidays, cinema / film, shopping / fashion and motor vehicles.

As part of Heritage Lottery Fund’s initial support, £603,800 of development funding has been awarded to enable the museum to finalise their exciting plans for the future - ensuring they are informed by extensive consultation with local people. The HLF will then consider a final application from the museum towards the end of 2015 for the full grant award of up to £10.75m, after which construction work will begin.

Richard Evans, Director of Beamish, said: “We are absolutely jumping for joy at this incredible news – here at Beamish – and to be honest we are all a bit stunned and can hardly believe it! The team here have worked so hard for the past four years developing this Remaking Beamish project – and I am so proud of what they have achieved together. Now

the hard work begins of course – working with local people to collect the buildings and objects we need, then creating an exciting range of new exhibits from a Coaching Inn set in the early 1800s to a complete 1950s Town. It is so exciting – and such good news not just for Beamish but the whole region, helping us attract more tourists and create more jobs and training opportunities for young people."

Explaining the importance of the HLF support for Beamish, Ivor Crowther, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North East, said: "The UK's largest open air museum, Beamish is one of the North East's most popular attractions and of national historic importance. Today's HLF support means these visionary plans, that mark the start of an incredible 12-year journey for Beamish, can now get fully underway. Plans include new exhibits; vastly improved and innovative access to the collections and the creation of a complete 1950s town – all of which will not only open a door to the North East's past but also drastically increase visitor numbers and boost the museum's income making it financially secure for the future. Once completed, this project will also create almost 100 new jobs and 50 apprenticeships too which is something we were particular pleased to see in the proposals."

Notes to editors

About Beamish
Beamish is a regional open air museum that uses its collections to tell the story of everyday life in the North East through time. Social, Agricultural, Transport and Industrial collections are preserved, studied and showcased in authentic settings across the 350 acre site. There are no glass cases or labels and people experience history directly in an immersive way, learning through all the senses. Currently periods from 1820 to Second World War are represented across the site in both translocated and reproduced period buildings – although the museum collects up to 1990 to help provide the wealth of material needed for future developments. Most of the buildings and collections are donated by local people to enable Beamish to tell their story.

Beamish is registered charity with more than 2,000 Friends and Business Friends. The museum attracted 589,000 visitors in 2013 – a record year in its 44-year history. It is a major tourist attraction (the largest in the NE region) and operates self-sufficiently – generating all the income needed from visitors. It is a major local employer with more than 300 staff and 350 active volunteers contributing 25,000 hrs / year.

About the grant award
Beamish has received initial support for a £10.75m bid from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the 'Remaking Beamish' project. Development funding of £603,800 has been awarded to help progress plans to apply for a full grant at a later date.

Initial support means the project meets HLF criteria for funding and HLF believes the project has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so this is an endorsement of outline proposals. The project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to secure a firm award.

Further information

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