Boston Castle to reach new heights

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Occupying one of the highest points in Rotherham and visible for many miles around, Boston Castle is to be saved and transformed into a new visitor centre thanks to confirmation of a £590,000 Heritage Lottery Fund grant*.

Semi-derelict and out of use for the past decade, the Grade II listed castle originally dates back to 1775 and was built by the Earl of Effingham as a hunting lodge. It is situated in the centre of 23 acre Boston Park, which has long been popular for walking activities and enjoying the spectacular views.

Fiona Spiers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the Yorkshire and the Humber region, said: “The grant is a welcome New Year boost for Rotherham residents who can now look forward to a revitalised Boston Castle. The project, totalling £1.7million, will see Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) transform the Castle and its surrounding landscape into an attractive and accessible experience for everyone to enjoy.”

The castle will be fully restored and a new low level extension built. The site will become a visitor centre from which people can explore the heritage of the Victorian park and town below. It will feature exhibition areas, an education room, toilets, a function room, a first-floor viewing platform and an outside café terrace. The battlements will be reinstated in original salvaged stone, and the windows repaired with 18th-century designs.

A programme of stimulating and interesting activities will be developed that will target school children, family groups and adults. The project will also see the creation of three new jobs. There will be exhibitions and guided tours for visitors, and new opportunities for volunteers to take part.

Coun. Iain St. John, Rotherham Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Cultural Services and Sport, said he was delighted with the news. He added: "I am so pleased that the hard work of the Friends of Boston Castle, aided by the professional input of officers from Rotherham Borough Council, has paid off and has resulted in a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Boston Castle is an absolute gem which deserves to be restored to its former glory. Not only does it help to enhance interest in Rotherham’s past, but also has endless educational possibilities. Plus, it is such a fascinating building in its own right. It is steeped in history and offers one of the most stunning views in the borough. I cannot think of a more worthy project for funding.

I very much look forward to visiting Boston Castle once the renovations have been completed and spending many an afternoon strolling though its beautiful parkland."

Rotherham Borough Council's Chief Executive, Martin Kimber, described it as "excellent news". He added: "The size of the grant award demonstrates just how important this building is, not just regionally but nationally. It is good to know that we can now get on with the works needed to ensure Boston Castle becomes a flagship for Rotherham and can be enjoyed by future generations."

Janet Worrall from The Friends of Boston Castle and Parklands, said: "The Friends group are delighted that after eight years of campaigning and some disappointments along the way, funding through Rotherham Borough Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund has been secured for the restoration of Boston Castle. This important building, which has been Rotherham’s landmark since 1776, will now be preserved for future generations to enjoy and its story not forgotten."

The exciting works to Boston Castle are due to start in Spring 2010. To date, grants worth just under £12.5million have been awarded to more than 148 projects in Rotherham from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Four HLF awards to RMBC are currently in progress in the town .These include just over £4.5million going towards the refurbishment of Clifton Park under the Parks for People programme; a wide variety of works to Rotherham town centre under HLF's Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI); and two exciting local community projects run under the Your Heritage grant scheme examining Rotherham's industrial heritage.

Notes to editors

* The HLF grant to the project Boston Castle Restoration – The Learning Tower of Rotherham is for £590,000 (35% of project costs) and is a second-round pass, which means it is a confirmed award.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, since 1994 the Heritage Lottery Fund has not only revitalised hundreds of museums, parks, historic buildings, landscapes and wildlife sites, but has also given new meaning to heritage itself. People from every walk of life are now involved with the heritage that inspires them, making choices about what they want to keep and share from the past, for future generations. HLF has supported more than 33,900 projects, allocating over £4.4billion across the UK, including £341million to more than 2,500 projects across the Yorkshire and the Humber region alone.

The project also received extensive input and support from local ward members Councillors; Rose McNeely, Mahroof Hussain and Peter Wootton

Rotherham Council heritage projects in 2010 – a round up

Clifton Park
Grade II listed Clifton Park is receiving a successful major makeover thanks to a £4.8million HLF grant. The well-used 23 hectare park close to Rotherham town centre has seen improvements to main pedestrian routes, and a restoration of the bandstand, memorial garden, rock garden and cenotaph. Children have long been at the heart of Clifton Park and a brand new "Clifton Play Park" has been created comprising eight different zones to suit all age groups and interests. Many of the exciting ideas and designs behind the play park were created by local schools and community groups. Park boundaries and entrances have also been improved.

Rotherham Town Centre Transformation
Rotherham Town Centre is set to be transformed thanks to an HLF grant of nearly £1.15million under the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) scheme. The programme will focus on the magnificent parish church situated in the middle of the town centre, the approach road leading to it, and will have a focus on Bridge Gate, Wellgate, High Street and Westgate. Plans for the exciting regeneration include: new seating, paths and signage around the church and its environs; vacant and derelict units to be revived with traditional shop fronts; and repair to Rotherham's medieval buildings at risk.

Steelos – Song of Steel
The council's archives and local studies service has been working with young people, heritage and arts groups as well as MAGMA, the local steel museum, on an exciting collaborative project exploring the history of steel-making in Rotherham thanks to a £33,000 HLF grant. The project has involved creative prose and song writing workshops with professional writers and musicians, and local people have also had the chance to be interviewed by volunteers and oral history recordings collected. An exhibition will be held at MAGMA in March 2010 which will then travel to libraries

around the town.

Rockingham Pattern Book

The former Rockingham Pottery, which flourished in the early 1800s, will now have a unique record of its porcelain designs widely available to the public thanks to a £50,000 HLF grant given to Rotherham Council. The Rockingham Pattern Book, owned by the local authority, contains almost 400 pages of hand-painted designs used for the tea and dessert ware manufactured at the Pottery. The grant has enabled the document to be expertly cleaned and restored and for every image to be faithfully reproduced on a CD held by the archive section in Rotherham Central Library. Details of the Pattern Book can now also be viewed online as part of this project, which is due to complete mid 2010.

Further information

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