Brecknock Museum

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The Connecting Communities and Collections project has achieved a first-round pass which means the council can now develop the project proposals, during the next year, in preparation for the second round application.

Powys County Council Board member for Leisure and Recreation, Councillor Gwyn Gwillim, commented: “This is a major step forward for Brecknock Museum and it gives us a real opportunity to restore this remarkable building, bring the displays up to modern standards and allow the public better access to the collections."

The project aims to increase public access to and awareness of the Brecknock Museum collections, generating knowledge of and engagement with the history and cultural heritage of Brecknockshire.

If successful it will help restore and conserve the fabric and structure of the original 1842 shire hall and assize court and allow the development of a permanent art gallery, improved storage facilities, management and administration spaces and level public access for all, as well as the complete re-display and re-interpretation of its collections.

The assize court display will be adapted to enable visitors to participate in the reconstructed court room and the original cells will be restored and opened up to visitors for the first time.

Nigel Blackamore, Museum Curator, added: “Our partners, stakeholders and colleagues have worked tirelessly to produce a project which has impressed the Heritage Lottery Fund at round one and our thanks go out to all those who have played a part so far. This first round pass gives us the opportunity to fine tune our plans and it will provide a much needed boost to the local community.”

Dan Clayton Jones, Chair of HLF in Wales, said: “Brecknock Museum holds the largest collection in Powys including important material related to the archaeological and social history of mid-Wales, all housed within the Grade II* former Shire Hall. The project will ensure that the collection and building are saved for the benefit of future generations to enjoy and will provide a wide range of opportunities for people to get actively involved through education programmes, training and volunteering.

“As such we recognise the potential this project has to benefit the local community and have awarded a development grant to help the museum progress plans and get this project off the ground.”

Notes to editors

A first-round pass means the project meets our criteria for funding and we believe it has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.

Built in 1842, the Wyatt and Brandon designed Grade II* former Brecknock Shire Hall with its imposing Bath stone façade and central portico has dominated the local area since its construction. Encircled by Grade II listed iron railings the building is one of the finest examples of early Victorian “Greek Revival” architecture in Wales. The Buildings Grade II* listing is a category enjoyed by around 4% of listed buildings and described in government guidance (PPG15:

Planning and the Historic Environment, para. 3.6) as ‘of particularly great importance to the nation’s built heritage’.

Brecknock Museum was founded in 1928 by Sir John Conway Lloyd, a notable local historian, preservationist and the founder of the Brecknock Society. Sir John was increasingly concerned about the rate at which the county’s antiquities were being lost from the then County of Brecknock. He recognised that a greater local involvement was required to study and provide local safe keeping of this heritage material for future generations. With advice from Sir Mortimer Wheeler, then director of the National Museum of Wales, he set out to save for the county the recently discovered Llangors log boat. With the intervention and financial assistance of the 1st Lord Glanusk, a building was purchased, the log boat saved and the museum founded.

The museum initially occupied an independent chapel in the centre of Brecon, with the Brecknock Society running it until 1950, at which point the Society passed the management and control of the Museum to Brecknockshire County Council and a professional curator was employed. The management of the museum was then again transferred to Powys County Council following the 1974 reorganisation of local government. One of the final acts of the old Brecknockshire County Council was to move the museum and its collections to the old Brecknock Shire Hall, where it has been based ever since.

The central role of the Museum Service is to collect, care for, display and interpret the material culture of Powys. The service recognises the importance of actively promoting the range and variety of its collections, in order to reflect the regional distinctions and cultural diversity within Powys. This helps to increase public awareness and understanding of the county's heritage as well as playing a vital role in helping to create a sense of place and cultural identity.

The collections held by the Museum Service are an important social, historical, cultural and academic resource. Improving physical, social and intellectual access to these collections for residents, researchers and visitors is critical. The service needs to be able to encourage and foster interest and engagement on as wide a scale as possible. The ability to present an active programme of exhibitions and events that promote cultural and social inclusion and the development of an education and outreach service along with a volunteer network are crucial in meeting this aim.

The museum houses regular art and social history exhibitions, alongside educational activities. Specific events include The Big Draw and the Festival of British Archaeology. Exhibitions and activities are funded by Powys County Council, small project grants from CyMAL, the Federation of Museums Wales and other local funding bodies, including the Brecon Town Council.

Further information

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