Lottery grant for Brecknock Museum

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The £2,497,100 grant will ensure that the Grade II listed building, its history and its collections will be safeguarded for the future.

The museum houses the largest collection in Powys including important material related to the archaeological and social history of Mid-Wales and has developed in recent years to include a significant number of works of contemporary art by nationally significant artists.

A town centrepiece in Brecon, the former Shire Hall will now be refurbished and its collections made more accessible to both local people and to the tourists that flood the town each year. Welcoming the announcement, Trustee and Chair to the Heritage Lottery Fund Wales Committee, Dr Manon Williams, said, “This is a significant grant awarded to a very exciting project and we are delighted that the UK Board of the Heritage Lottery Fund have recognised its potential. Not only does the Brecknock Museum contain significant historical collections but the building itself is a valuable architectural structure which can now be safeguarded for the future.”

Architectural Legacy
Originally built in 1842 as Brecknock Shire Hall, the building itself is considered one of the finest examples of early Victorian Greek Revival architecture in Wales and has escaped any significant alterations externally, remaining a commanding structure in Brecon.

Although home to the Brecknock Museum since 1974, the building’s previous life as both Shire Hall and County Assize Court remain apparent within the building. The project will now seek to make the museum more accessible by creating a more logical ordering of the collections and its space.

Assembly Member for Brecon and Radnorshire, Kirsty Williams, said: “Ensuring the legacy of this important Brecon landmark is vital for the town and its people and this grant will provide a real opportunity to restore this remarkable building and bring the space into the 21st Century. Securing the long-term future of this historic building will hopefully bring wider benefits to the town and help boost the attraction for visitors to the region.”

Digital technology
In addition to repair and refurbishment works, plans for the museum include the creation of a dedicated learning space, the expansion of the Education & Outreach service and the introduction of digital engagement tools to complement existing talks and presentations.

Powys County Council Cabinet Member for Arts and Culture, Councillor Graham Brown, said, “This project has been in development for many years and we are thrilled that it can now be implemented thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund grant. The Brecknock Museum has played a part in the town’s history for nearly two hundred years and hopefully our plans will allow it to continue to play a part for many more years. The restoration will provide impetus to the regeneration of the area and a much needed financial boost to the local economy.”

Notes to editors

This £2,497,100 grant has been awarded to Powys County Council by the Heritage Lottery Fund UK Board. This grant follows a Round One pass, including a development grant of £141,200, which was awarded in March 2011.

Project aims include

- Urgent conservation and repair work to the historic fabric of the Grade II listed building
- New fit out and redisplay of the museum's collection, aiming to make the artefacts more accessible (physically, intellectually and culturally)
- Creation of new display/education spaces, visitor facilities and modern storage facilities
- New build link with the relocated library/archive facility

Additional plans

- The creation of new permanent and temporary exhibition spaces allowing the museum to undertake high status loans from national museums for the first time. A wealth of material is held by external institutions which, when displayed alongside the existing collection, will provide a more comprehensive learning experience for visitors
- The expansion and reorganisation allowing the creation of a dedicated learning space with modern educational resources and facilities. Currently, the lack of such a space encumbers the use of the museum for more active learning by school groups and class visits
- The redisplay and reinterpretation of the collection aims to reach out to different learning groups and present a more logical ordering of the collections. IT technology will be employed to help engagement with the collections but guided talks and presentations by staff and volunteers are also planned
- The recruitment of a second education and outreach officer will enable the museum to engage a wider number of school groups and under-represented audiences in learning activities. Volunteers are also expected to play an important role in supporting the programme of events and activities
- A programme of training for staff and volunteers is planned in collection care, management, documentation and cataloguing and in total, 100 people are expected to receive training during the course of the project

About Brecknock Museum and Art Gallery

- Brecknock Museum is listed at Grade II, as a handsome neo-classical public building occupying a prominent location within the Brecon Conservation area
- The building now known as the Brecknock Museum and Art Gallery was built as Brecknock Shire Hall between 1839 and 1842 to the designs of Wyatt and Brandon, architects of Great Russell Street, London. Considered a fine example of public Greek Revival architecture, the building has escaped significant alterations externally, and still enjoys a commanding position in the townscape of Brecon. Surrounding the Museum are a set of original railings listed at Grade II and an ornate Grade II pillar box
- Originally the County's Assize Court, in 1971, changes to the administration of justice led to a transfer of these functions to new premises and conversion to a museum took place in 1973 / 74. Internally, despite many alterations, the volume of the courtroom is still discernible, and many other rooms retain their historic character
- The original museum was founded in 1928 by Sir John Conway Lloyd, a notable local historian and the founder of the Brecknock Society. During the 1920s, excavations at the early medieval site of Llangorse Crannog, unearthed an important medieval log boat and the society led a successful campaign to create an institution to conserve and display this item locally
- The museum is the largest in Borough and contains collections of generally local or regional significance. Highlights include; material excavated from the Roman fort Brecon Gaer; and a varied collection of costume and

textiles dating from the 17th century; the largest collection of Welsh love spoons outside the National Museum of Wales; fine and decorative art collections containing a selection of Swansea and Nantgarw ceramics. In addition, galleries cover Prehistory to the Dark Age, Local History, Natural History and Geology

- The Fine Art collection is of regional and national importance, especially modern works relating to the locality and landscape. The holding includes works by Augustus John, Eric Gill, Josef Herman, David Jones, John Piper, Graham Sutherland and John Evan Thomas

Further information

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