British Museum secures £10m Lottery investment

27/01/2012

HLF has announced confirmed funding of £15.5m for four heritage projects in London, Stirling, Penzance and Birmingham. The projects are:

• completing the World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre at the British Museum (£10m);
• telling the story of the Battle of Bannockburn through state-of-the-art 3D technology (£3.94m);
• rejuvenating Porthcurno Museum in Penzance, once the world's largest cable station £1.4m);
• marking 350 years of Mr Punch and exploring the tradition of folk puppetry across the UK (£240,000).

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of HLF, said: "From traditional folk puppetry to one of our greatest museums - these projects reflect the fascinating diversity of the UK's heritage. Today's Heritage Lottery Fund investment will improve people's experience of heritage and encourage them to take a hands-on role in protecting it for the future."

The British Museum World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre (WCEC), London – confirmed grant of £10m
HLF's grant will enable The British Museum to complete the WCEC in the North West part of its current site in central London.The new space will mean that some of the Museum's most important collections will be brought back onsite to Bloomsbury where it will be far easier for the public, researchers and scholars and community groups to access them. Alongside a high-quality exhibition space, the centre will comprise science laboratories, conservation studios and state-of-the-art storage facilities.

For the first time, a programme of 'behind the scenes tours' will enable visitors to the museum to view up-close the specialist conservation work being undertaken by the museum's conservators. An impressive range of educational activities will be delivered over the course of the project with a highlight being 'Object Journeys', a series of community activities centred around the museum's internationally renowned collections from the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Made up of 180,000 objects, this collection contains includes objects from indigenous societies, as part of the project it will be returned onsite to the British Museum and re-housed in the new centre.

The space will also provide volunteers with the chance to get involved with the ethnographic collection, helping to unpack it in its new home; they will also assist with 'Hands On' object handling activities around special exhibitions. The WCEC will also contain a Loans Management and Training Centre which will allow the museum to improve its already successful artefact loan programme to museums across the UK and beyond.

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of HLF, said: "The Heritage Lottery Fund's grant for the WCEC will have a dramatic impact upon the British Museum's facilities for conservation, scientific research, storage and loans. The centre will vastly improve the British Museum's ability to care for the most fragile parts of its collections in the best possible conditions and will get more people involved in its work."

The Battle of Bannockburn, Stirling – confirmed grant of £3.94m
The Heritage Lottery Fund has announced a grant of £3.94m to the National Trust for Scotland for the Battle of Bannockburn project, a state-of-the-art visitor attraction to commemorate its 700th anniversary and its place in shaping the history of Scotland.

When construction work for the new centre at Bannockburn is confirmed, it will create an unrivalled experience for the thousands of people who visit the battle ground every year while affording dignity to this important historic site.

Ground-breaking technology will be used to give visitors a true sense of the battle, from the social history of the time to medieval warcraft. People will be able to interact with 3D digital images as never before, experiencing graphics which will respond with movement and commentary. Visitors will also have the chance to play their part in the battle and apply their newly-acquired knowledge of tactics and weaponry to influence the outcome.

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of HLF said: “This is a ground-breaking project for Scotland and for the heritage sector. With this new facility, Bannockburn will be able to inspire visitors of all ages with an experience that reflects the cultural significance of this battle site. Even young people whose daily lives are filled with technology, from phones to games consoles, will be astounded by the interpretation as they enjoy learning about our past.

“I am delighted that it is our heritage which is providing an international showcase for the cutting-edge technology being developed here while also giving us a visitor centre which will make a significant contribution to Scotland’s culture, society and economy.”

Porthcurno Telegraph Museum, Penzance – confirmed grant of £1.4m
Located just three miles from Lands End, Porthcurno Telegraph Museum was once home to the world’s biggest telegraph cable station that was established in 1870. From this remote site undersea telegraph cables stretched for more than 150,000 miles making it the epicentre of telegraph technology and an invaluable hub of communications during WWII. HLF’s investment will help the museum create a dynamic new Learning Centre that will be a fitting addition to what is already considered the world centre for the study of international telegraphy and early wireless, and the place that was home to the forerunner of the internet and today’s connected world.

The centre will provide new spaces for educational activities, improved archive facilities and better access to the museum’s significant collections. Visitor activities will focus on the new exhibitions, giving people the opportunity to explore and learn about the ground-breaking work that went on at Porthcurno.

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of HLF, said: “Porthcurno Telegraph Museum is the unassuming home to what was once the centre of Britain’s technological development and the site that linked Britain to its Empire through thousands of miles of underwater cable. The Heritage Lottery Fund’s investment will bring alive the story of this internationally significant museum, the people that worked there and the revolutionary work that took place.”

PuppetLink – 350 years of Mr Punch, cross-UK – confirmed grant of £240,000
For over 300 years Mr Punch has played a popular role in people’s childhood memories across the UK. HLF’s grant will enable PuppetLink – one of the UK’s leading puppetry organisations – to roll out an extensive learning programme telling the story of Mr Punch and wider puppetry traditions. A wide range of family events and activities will be on offer in locations across the UK and delivered in partnership with leading museums including the V&A’s Museum of Childhood. Events such as school visits; history talks; and interactive performances and workshops will reach thousands of young people and families over the course of the project.

The charity’s UK-wide network of 200 volunteers will get involved with different strands of the project including marketing, helping with events and leading heritage tours. This project will bring together and share, for the first time, a largely unseen and comprehensive archive comprising the first photograph of Punch and Judy, press cuttings and puppets. Training in archive research and recording and event management will offer volunteers the chance to gain tangible skills and help offer a high-quality experience to the public.

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of HLF, said: “The tradition of folk puppetry stretches back hundreds of years and has roots in many countries across the globe. Perhaps one of puppetry’s most famous faces is that of Mr Punch who is this year celebrating his 350th anniversary. This Heritage Lottery Fund investment will help tell the story of Mr Punch and folk puppetry for new audiences and help reinstate puppetry as a credible art form.”

Notes to editors

• A confirmed award means that money had already been earmarked by HLF for the project in question and that the full amount has now been secured.
• Initial support of £4.8m including £415,000 development funding was also awarded today to refurbish Glasgow’s Kelvin Hall to create a home for The City of Glasgow and Glasgow University’s museum collections, and a centre of excellence for teaching and research in the cultural sector.
• A first-round pass/initial support 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.
• Images available on request.

For further information

Please contact Laura Bates or Katie Owen, HLF Press Office, on tel: (020) 7591 6027/6036. Out of hours mobile: 07973 613820.