

Oakham Castle improvements move one step closer

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The council has now received £114,000 from the HLF for further preparation work during 2013 with a view to submitting a full and final bid later this year.

A successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund will enable Rutland County Council to carry out extensive work throughout the castle, an enhanced events programme, as well as more regular re-enactments and living history.

Council Leader Roger Begy, said: "Getting approval at this first stage of the bid process is a major achievement and should not be underestimated. We are thrilled with this news as we put a great deal of hard work into our application. It's exciting to think we're only one stage away from potentially getting final approval, but must not get ahead of ourselves. During the next few months, we'll work closely with colleagues at the Heritage Lottery Fund as we prepare to submit our final bid later this year."

Vanessa Harbar, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands, said: "Oakham Castle is an exceptional site full of fascinating historic features. We thought the proposals for this ambitious project were inspiring and if all goes to plan Rutland County Council will be on track to ensure the site and the Great Hall can be enjoyed by generations to come. We look forward to working with them as they further develop their ideas over the coming months."

In addition to the plans for extensive restoration work and additional events, other areas identified for improvement are repair of the castle walls, new and improved toilet facilities, better information and signage, and improved facilities for weddings and family events.

Prior to the final bid being submitted in October, further work will be carried out which will include community consultation, putting together long-term plans for maintenance and education, as well as setting up a panel of young people to contribute to the project.

The final bid will be submitted mid-October with a decision expected in early 2014.

Oakham Castle is the best preserved Norman Great Hall in England and was used extensively until 1970 as the local court. Occasional crown courts and coroner's inquests still take place.

However, the castle is best known for its collection of commemorative horseshoes donated by Peers of the Realm. Over 230 horseshoes hang on the walls of the Great Hall. These represent the unique custom that every peer of the realm must give a horseshoe to the lord of the manor on their first visit to Oakham. The custom has been followed for at least 500 years and probably dates back to the 12th century. The oldest surviving horseshoe is said to have been given by Edward IV around 1470. The most recent were given by HRH The Princess Royal in 1999, HRH The Prince of Wales in 2003 and HRH Princess Alexandra 2005.

Notes to editors

The key aims of the project are to:

- Develop Oakham Castle as a cultural centre for Rutland
- Consolidate the castle walls to ensure conservation, and to restore its visual impact in the town centre
- Conserve the Great Hall to provide a safe environment for the historic horseshoe collection
- Improved access to the site including improved facilities
- Greater promotion of the history and heritage of Oakham Castle and Rutland
- Work more closely with Discover Rutland to promote Oakham as a tourist destination to the benefit of the county
- Generate increased income from the site to help ensure its long term viability
- Enable more and better quality community events to take place in the grounds

Initial support plus development funding means the project meets Heritage Lottery Fund criteria for funding and they believe it 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 will submit fully developed proposals to secure a firm award at a later date.

Further information

HLF press office: Katie Owen on 020 7591 6036 / 07973 613 820.

For more information about the project, please visit [Oakham Castle website](#).