Rt. Hon Lord Derek Foster, Heritage Lottery Fund's North East Committee Chair, steps down

30/03/2011

Washington resident Rt. Hon Lord Derek Foster steps down on 31 March 2011 after having spent five years chairing the North East England Committee of the HLF.

In his final year as chair of HLF in the North East, Rt. Hon Lord Derek Foster looks at the impact its funding has had on people and communities, and calls on the North East to shape what HLF supports in the future. Here he looks back at some of his favourite projects and asks for your views on the future of heritage funding in the North East.

"The committee that I have chaired covers a region that extends from Berwick-upon-Tweed to Middlesbrough. During the 16 years that the HLF has existed, we have invested £214million supporting thousands of North East projects.

"These range from the restoration of historic buildings; rejuvenating town parks and promoting community involvement. The projects, both large and small, include multi-million pound projects that have refurbished our historic buildings and rejuvenated our museums and grants that have protected our stunning landscapes and wildlife. We have also recently awarded a project that encouraged a group of local young people to research and celebrate the history of the Geordie dialect.

"Not only do we help to protect the North East's precious heritage sites, HLF funding also provides a host of volunteer and training opportunities encouraging everyone to take part in the future of their heritage.

"As I conclude my term of office, HLF has launched a three month consultation on their strategy from 2013-19. It aims to gather public and sector views on we should continue to do and what we should do differently. We want to hear what people in the North East think about their heritage and what we can do to protect it in the future.

"With a massive £300million annual awards budget, to be allocated between 2013 and 2019 across the UK, we want people to continue to have their say and influence on how HLF money, from Lottery sales, should be spent.

"Personally, I'm extremely proud of how our funding has helped support such a wide range of projects across the North East. These projects have transformed and created lasting communities and given people the opportunities to learn and volunteer to develop the skills they need to share what is important to them.

"I would like to see heritage remain at the heart of our strong communities and for our funding to continue to benefit local people by responding to their needs in modern times.

"People are at the very heart of what we do and that's why we want both heritage professionals and Lottery players to tell us what our priorities should be, what we should continue to do and what we should do differently. The responses from across the North East will feed into HLF's new five year plan from 2013 which is currently being prepared for launch in 2012."

Lord Foster's 'top five':

- **Barnes Park Restoration**
  Barnes Park was laid out in the early 1900s as a local work creation initiative during the recession of that time. Unusually for the period, the design was developed without the involvement of any recognised landscape architects. A £2.4million investment rejuvenated this popular park, carefully conserving the landscape and restoring the bandstand and the cannon. New play areas were added and the disused tennis courts were replaced with an ornamental garden.
- **The Spennymoor Settlement – Everyman Theatre**
  A HLF grant of £50,000 grant to the Spennymoor Settlement to aid the conservation and development of the Grade II listed Everyman Theatre allowing the fascinating history of this well-loved community building brought back to life for the public. Conservation works include restoring unique architectural features such as the Tisa Hess stone sculpture. The Spennymoor Settlement was formed in 1931 and opened the Everyman Theatre in Spennymoor in 1939.
- **Woodhorn Mining Museum**
  One of the UK's most important 19th century collieries, Woodhorn in Ashington was restored and transformed into a major cultural attraction. With a £10million grant this innovative project now provides the local community and visitors alike with a place rich in heritage and identity alongside valuable education and training benefits.
- **Great North Museum**
  Newcastle's popular Hancock Museum has been completely redeveloped, bringing together the North East's premier collections of archaeology, natural history and geology under one roof as the Great North Museum: Hancock. Many of the collections in the new museum are displayed for the first time in modern, interactive galleries. Within the first two months of opening, the museum received over 200,000 visitors, all of whom agreed it deserved to be called "great".
- **Talking Heads**
  Led by young people, from Newcastle, and run by a leading UK charity Headliners, the project focused on the origins of the Geordie dialect and its impact on the identity of the North East. 'Talking Heeds' let the youngsters discover the origins and explore, the history of common phrases and words such as 'Deeks' (Look at) 'Scran' (food) and 'Hyem' (home), which could date back as far as Anglo Saxon times, which are still used in everyday conversation in the North East.

Notes to editors

Have your say: HLF's three-month consultation Shaping the future – for heritage, for everyone is now live on our website and all views will help shape HLF's strategy from 2013 to 2019. This is people's chance to tell us what they think we should continue to do and what we should do differently. To find out more.

Lord Derek Foster - Biography
After 10 years in the private sector, three years in the voluntary sector and five years as Assistant Director of Education in Sunderland, Derek Foster was elected as Labour's MP for Bishop Auckland in 1979.

He was appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary to Rt. Hon Neil Kinnock when he became Leader of the Labour Party in 1983. He was elected Opposition Chief Whip in 1985 and was continuously re-elected for 10 years. In 1995 he was appointed Shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster; in 1997 he was appointed Minister of State in the Cabinet Office but resigned after 3three days. He was Chairman of the Education and Employment Select Committee from 1997-2001. He was appointed to the Privy Council in 1993. He was appointed Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the County of Durham in 2001 and to the House of Lords in June 2005.

Further information

Laura Bates, HLF Press Office on 020 7591 6027 or lbates@hlf.org.uk.