£2m investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund for Charles Dickens Museum

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Initial support has also been awarded for four projects located across the UK from Dunfermline to Devon.

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund, said: "The Charles Dickens Museum is a real 'gem' in the heart of London; a small place that packs a big punch. The £2m investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund will help radically transform not just the building itself but the way people experience and learn about this internationally-revered literary master. We're particularly delighted that the museum is so determined to see the work completed by 2012 so enabling it to celebrate Dickens' bicentenary in true style."

Charles Dickens Museum, Bloomsbury, London – confirmed grant of £2m
The Dickens Museum, based in the writer's former home in Bloomsbury is where he penned some of his most famous novels. It is now home to an extensive collection of over 10,000 books, first editions, manuscripts and letters.

The project will double the current exhibition space including the additional use of the adjoining house, allowing for the collections to be better displayed, and for state-of-the-art storage facilities to be provided that will protect the most precious items. New visitor and education centre spaces will bring Dickens' work alive for people of all ages. The architectural fabric of the building will be carefully restored giving easier access and recreating the original atmosphere of Dickens' home.

Phillip Pullman, author, said: "Charles Dickens' genius was recognised immediately; he probably had the greatest public following of any writer; the vitality and energy that pulses through every paragraph is just as palpable today. We need to remind people of what a treasure we have in his work and how lucky we are to have him still alive in his books! The Dickens Museum exists to preserve his legacy and this Heritage Lottery Fund grant will help it reach many more people than ever before. Everyone who visits will benefit from a closer acquaintance with this most English, but most universal, of authors. It deserves the support of the nation."

Initial support and a total of £437,500 in development funding were also awarded today to a further four projects:

• Restoring House Mill – Bromley-by-Bow, London – first-round pass of £2.65m, including £248,000 development funding
House Mill is the largest remaining tidal mill in the world and the oldest surviving one on Three Mills Island. In medieval times the island was known as 'Three Mills' and provided flour to the local bakers who supplied bread to the City of London. Now, the island is a true historic gem in the heart of the Thames Gateway development area and forms part of a wider regeneration project in line with the Olympics. The project aims to restore the four mill wheels and grinding stones to working order. The refurbished mill will create many volunteer opportunities and offer workshops teaching traditional skills such as metal-work, carpentry and hand milling.

• Castle Drogo - A Design For Life – Exeter, Devon – first-round pass of £2.5m
Castle Drogo is the last castle to have been built in England, created between 1911 and 1931. The castle was created by Julius Drewe, and designed by architect Edwin Lutyens. The castle is in serious disrepair with water damage

throughout the building and this timely project aims to undertake major restoration work. A heritage skills and training space will be created offering training in masonry, joinery and furniture-making to volunteers and visitors. The project aims to help protect the future of the castle by offering a wide range of uses for the building including new learning and exhibition spaces and opportunities to explore the estate's extensive grounds on Dartmoor.

• RPSI 2020 – Railway Preservation Society of Ireland, Whitehead, Co Antrim – first-round pass of £1.8m, including £165,000 development funding.

Since 1964 the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland has been the main guardian of Ireland's railway heritage, and the sole operator of all main-line stream train operations throughout Ireland. Project plans include a major extension and upgrading of their museum and secure storage at the main engineering base at Whitehead in Northern Ireland. Alongside the physical changes there are plans to develop heritage engineering skills through the recruitment and training of an increased workforce, and also establishing high quality access and viewing facilities for visitors, telling the story of the railways.

• Royal Dunfermline – A Story to Weave, Dunfermline, Fife – first-round pass of £2.8m including £24,000 development funding

The historic city of Dunfermline, an ancient Scottish capital from the 11th – 15th centuries, still retains much of its medieval character and has a strong manufacturing heritage. The project aims to create a new museum and art gallery integrated with the on-site Carnegie Library facilities. The Dunfermline Museum will tell the story of the city, along with a Gateway exhibition to the surrounding Heritage Quarter and space for an ever-changing programme of temporary events and exhibitions. The project will offer volunteers and community groups the chance to help curate the new displays and develop their own exhibitions.

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.

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.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

Further information

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