New lease of life for north Wales town centre thanks to HLF cash boost

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The investment is through HLF's Townscape Heritage Initiative* (THI) and will enable Conwy County Borough Council (CCBC) to improve and preserve the unique character of the built heritage within the town's retail centre.
Once a thriving Victorian seaside resort Colwyn Bay has many distinctive buildings which have fallen into disrepair after many years of social and economic decline.

The aim of the THI scheme will be to create new and sustainable uses for the buildings to attract new businesses, improve the retail offer and build the confidence in the local community.

Improvements include restoring the historic and commercial quality of the Victorian conservation area, bringing vacant buildings back into use and establishing a central hub for visitors with exhibition spaces displaying regeneration projects, 'drop in' conservation advice and a local history centre.

Premises earmarked for improvements include the old Woolworth building, the art deco A&A Cash & Carry and the prominent Central Hotel. Further restoration work will see the reintroduction of traditional shop fronts and cast iron canopies, and in all 37 projects are considered a priority under this scheme.

The scheme will also link with local college courses where heritage based training modules will offer skills workshops in traditional building techniques to help fill the specialist skills shortage and ensure long term maintenance of the built heritage in the area.

Jennifer Stewart, Head of HLF Wales said: "The Heritage Lottery Fund is proud to be playing a key role in helping to revitalise Colwyn Bay's town centre. We have invested in this scheme to support the Council's bid to transform the town, making essential improvements and repairs that will encourage new businesses to invest and attract visitors back.

"We are positive this scheme will help make Colwyn Bay a vibrant seaside town once again and by doing so boost the local economy, and make the local community feel more confident about the future."

The restoration work and major improvements planned under this scheme for the town centre will complement an earlier THI scheme which was awarded £600,000 in September 1998 and focused on the whole of the conservation area and other regeneration projects that fall under the Bay Life+ umbrella.

The regeneration scheme will provide job and training opportunities for local students and professionals, public initiatives, possible award schemes, as well as improving the appearance of the town.

Councillor Phillip Evans, the Council's Portfolio Member for Governance and Regulation, said: "The announcement is great news for Colwyn Bay as it forms an essential component in the renaissance of the town that adds to successful initiatives such as the establishment of a regional events centre at Parc Eirias and other exciting waterfront regeneration schemes on the bay. The THI will enhance the great Victorian character that survives throughout Colwyn Bay and particularly within its commercial centre and will make it an exhilarating place to visit."

This scheme could result in up to £4.04million of investment being made into buildings in Colwyn Bay over a five year period. The funding partners are Conwy County Borough Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Cadw and the Welsh Assembly Government.

Further information

* HLF's Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) encourages partnerships of local organisations to carry out repairs and other works to a number of historic buildings, structures or spaces. Grants range from £500,000 to £2m. To date, HLF has invested over £214m regenerating towns that have suffered serious social and economic decline.

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