# East Antrim communities to explore their heritage

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Communities in East Antrim are to explore their cultural heritage in a new project thanks to a £33,800 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), it was announced today. The award was made to Mount Vernon Community Development Forum (MVCDF) and will be used to recruit and train volunteers to examine how past events have shaped and influenced their local communities today.

The project will enable the six communities of Mount Vernon, New Mossley, Rathcoole, Monkstown, Carrickfergus and Larne to create a permanent record of their cultural heritage. Volunteers from each community will be recruited and will be trained in a range of skills to research how historical events have impacted upon their communities and wider society in Northern Ireland.

Working in partnership with the Mid Antrim Museum Service, Ulster Peoples College and Reminiscence Network NI, the volunteers will develop skills in researching localised areas, capturing and recording personalised stories and gathering and archiving local memorabilia.

The volunteers will visit museums, libraries and other local heritage sites to research the history of the period before interviewing local people from their communities to capture their personal memories, stories and experiences of these events. These oral histories, along with photographs and memorabilia contributed by the local community and the information gained through the visits, will be used to create an exhibition which will be displayed at venues in each of the six communities and at the local museums in Carrickfergus, Mossley Mill and Larne. A booklet will also be produced and distributed to share this heritage with wider audiences.

Commenting on the announcement, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, said: “Opportunities for learning and participation are at the heart of this fantastic project to research and record the cultural heritage of six East Antrim communities. Local volunteers will be equipped with a host of new skills, members of the community will take part by sharing their stories and contributing artefacts and memorabilia and many more people will be able to learn about this heritage through the exhibition and booklet.

“We are delighted to support the community in this exploration of their past and hope it will inspire others to seek funding for their heritage project ideas."

Laura Feeney Co-ordinator from the Community Support & Development Partnership project led by MVCDF said: “This is a fantastic opportunity for local communities to explore their past and inspire people to become involved in recording and documenting their heritage. The project will capture the real essence of communities across East Antrim and empower them to create exhibitions using personal stories, photographs and memorabilia from the past to leave a lasting legacy for others to enjoy.”

HLF has grant-giving programmes to support both large and small heritage projects, and since 1994 has awarded £135million to projects across Northern Ireland. There is advice and support available for groups and organisations considering undertaking a heritage based project, including help to develop your idea and guide you through the application process.

If you have an idea for a heritage project and would like more information about HLF and its funding programmes, please contact us.