Creating Connections at the Cooper Gallery

16/01/2013

The Cooper Gallery: Creating Connections project seeks to increase the number of visitors by attracting new audiences to the venue and enabling more people to engage with its heritage and fascinating stories. The gallery celebrates its centenary next year and currently attracts in the region of 50,000 visitors annually. The HLF development grant has been awarded to help the Cooper Gallery progress their plans to apply for a full grant for the project of just under £635,000 at a later date.

The project plans to:

• extend the gallery spaces to allow more of the collection of historic works of art to be displayed
• make the gallery more interactive and fun for families and provide facilities for schools to engage with the heritage
• alter the building's layout to restore the original entrance and improve the outdoor public space at the rear
• improve artwork storage facilities and conserve works of art for display
• provide opportunities for more people to get involved through volunteering.

The project is a partnership between the Cooper Gallery trustees and Barnsley Council. The gallery is managed on behalf of the trustees by Barnsley Council's Arts and Museums Service. Specialists will now be appointed to help develop the plans before a round 2 bid is submitted later this year.

The Cooper Gallery opened in 1914 and is home to a collection of more than 400 historic works of art donated by wealthy Barnsley industrialists. Open six days a week, with free admission, the gallery offers a programme of exhibitions in its Fox Wing drawing of the historic painting collection, and changing exhibitions on the main gallery space.

Paul Elmhirst, chair of the Cooper Gallery trustees, said: "We are delighted to be partners in this ambitious project which has just won the backing of the Heritage Lottery Fund. As well as improving the facilities of the gallery the project will provide a focus for celebrating the centenary of the Cooper Art Gallery and the foresight of those remarkable Barnsley benefactors who made it possible."

Councillor Linda Burgess, Cabinet spokesperson for Development, Environment and Culture, said: "There is much anticipation around the approaching centenary of the Cooper Gallery and this project will focus on the stories of the collectors, many of whom were local figures during Barnsley's great industrial age.

"Creating Connections will enable more visitors to appreciate the heritage of the gallery's collection of historic artwork and the collectors themselves.

"The Cooper plays an important role in the cultural life of the borough and, if successful with the second round HLF application, the Creating Connections project will transform the gallery, making it an even more important part of the wider visitor offer in Barnsley."

Commenting on the award, Fiona Spiers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Yorkshire and the Humber, said: "We're delighted to award this initial support to the Cooper Gallery which will enable them to develop their plans to improve the offer to visitors of all ages. We look forward to receiving the full grant application in the future."

Notes to editors

A first-round pass means the project meets HLF criteria for funding and HLF believes the project 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. On occasion, an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their scheme.

Further information

Barnsley Council Corporate Communications on 01226 773 442 or communications@barnsley.gov.uk.