National Trust delighted at support from HLF to restore Croome Court

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The Heritage Lottery Fund have as part of the initial support provided a £15,000 development grant which will enable the National Trust to trial new ideas such as using guest curators to bring the interiors of the Court to life during its restoration.

Anne Jenkins, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands, said: "Croome Court, set in Capability Brown's rolling parkland, is a particularly spectacular historic site in Worcestershire. The Heritage Lottery Fund's initial support gives the green light for the National Trust to continue developing exciting plans for their restoration and interpretation project. Whilst this is just the beginning of the journey to secure a full grant, we are delighted to be providing some additional upfront money to help with development work."

Michael Smith, Property Manager at Croome, continued: “We were incredibly fortunate to receive funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund 14 years ago to fund the restoration of the parkland and so are absolutely delighted that they have initially supported our plans to restore Croome Court to its former glory. If we are successful with the next stage in the application process, these funds will ensure that the Court and the parkland remain reunited for ever.”

The National Trust acquired a lease of the Court in 2007, when it was purchased by the Croome Heritage Trust, and opened it to the public in September 2009. The National Trust needs to raise a total of £4.8m to restore the Worcestershire mansion and secure its long-term financial future.

“The feedback from our visitors has been fantastic,” continued Michael Smith, “they really enjoy exploring the rooms and see the scale of the restoration work needed and we’ve loved hearing their ideas for the Court too. It really has captured their imagination.”

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Notes to editors

The Croome Heritage Trust (CHT) is a charitable trust created by the Croome Estate Trust. The National Trust (NT) have leased the Court from the Croome Heritage Trust for 10 years within which time the NT must raise a minimum of £4.8m. Once those funds have been raised the NT will take a 999-year lease and declare it inalienable. The Court will be saved for the benefit of the nation – for ever, for everyone.

To restore and protect the Court’s long term financial future the NT needs to raise £4.8m. The restoration works will cost £3.3m and to provide for the buildings long term future, the NT needs to raise a further £1.5m for an endowment, the interest from which supports the ongoing maintenance and restoration work for ever. The application to the Heritage Lottery Fund is to support the restoration and interpretation costs.

The Trust's vision for Croome Court is to:

• Re-unite the Court and the parkland and recognise its historical significance as it was at Croome where Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and Robert Adam both established their reputations and changed the world of both garden design and architecture.
• Use volunteers and trainees to help with the conservation work at the property.
• Encourage a debate with our visitors as to how they would like to see the Court used.
• Increase the amount of access to the property through longer, but less formal opening.
• We will show more of the Court and share more of its history over the coming months and years.
• To secure the long-term financial future of the Court by raising the £4.8m to restore and endow it.

The people, the Court and the parkland of Croome

The People

The Court and its surrounding parkland was the vision of the 6th Earl of Coventry. He commissioned the-then relatively unknown Lancelot 'Capability' Brown to remodel the Court. Brown was then asked to create the surrounding parkland which has been restored by the National Trust over the last 13 years.

The 6th Earl of Coventry married Maria Gunning in 1752. She was a considered one of the most beautiful women of her time and was often written about; however, she died at just 28 years old from consumption believed to be from poisoning from the lead in the cosmetics she used. In 1764, the Earl then married Barbara St John. Barbara loved Croome Court and spent most of her time there.

The interiors of the house include rooms created by 'Capability' Brown and Robert Adam both using the skilled craftsmen of the day. Croome was one of the very first commissions for Robert Adam who was to become one of the greatest British architects of the late eighteenth century. For 'Capability' Brown, it was his first solo commission and from this corner of Worcestershire he made his reputation and throught his career he created many breathtaking landscapes across Britain including Bleinhem Palace.

As the restoration of the Court continues the different layers of its history will be brought alive for visitors to discover.

The Court

The Court is listed Grade I listed and is the fifth dwelling to be on the site. The current house dates from 1752 but both the National Trust and the Croome Heritage Trust are eager to research the building and discover parts of previous buildings still visible.

The Coventry family sold the Court in 1948. Since then, the Court has been a school, a centre for the Hare Krishna movement and a private family home.

The Parkland

Acquired by the National Trust in 1996, the park has been carefully returned to its 18th-century appearance, when it was the first landscape design of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown.

Supported by the HLF, the restoration project has recreated Brown's vision of a sweeping landscape that sits perfectly against the wider, natural backdrop of the Worcestershire countryside.

Staying faithful to Brown's plans, but using modern technology where appropriate, the 10-year scheme has been the largest of its kind undertaken by the National Trust.

Since 1996, the National Trust has:

• Replanted more than 45,000 trees and shrubs using global satellite positioning technology to ensure historical accuracy.
• Dredged the man-made ornamental lake and river, removing 50,000 cubic metres of silt.
• Returned 400 acres of arable farmland to English wildflower meadow.
• Reinstated two and a half miles of historic pathways.
• Restored 18 ornamental statues and buildings.

Further information

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