Crucial £13million invested in UK's heritage

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has today confirmed £13million worth of grants[1] for four diverse heritage projects across the UK. All Souls Church in Bolton, the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, Vindolanda in Northumberland and Stowe Landscape Gardens in Buckinghamshire, will share £13.3million.

HLF has also announced first-round passes[2] for Bletchley Park and Wentworth Castle. This initial support means that both projects can now move on to the next stage of their development plans before a firm funding decision is made by HLF.

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of the Heritage Lottery Fund, said:

“Today’s projects are perfect examples of the breadth of our heritage: a 19th-century church in the heart of Bolton; a maritime archive of global importance; a Roman settlement providing a snapshot of the ancient world; and spectacular 18th-century landscape gardens. This money will ensure that vital parts of our heritage are not only repaired and restored, but transformed for thousands more people to enjoy long into the future.”

Swapping pews for pods

HLF’s £3.3million grant will fund the transformation of the redundant 19th-century All Souls Church in Bolton into a state-of-the-art facility providing training, education, youth activities, health and welfare services to the local community. Plans include taking out the existing pews and replacing them with a community centre, made up of two ‘pods’ that will sit within the church building.

These visionary new structures will be the first of their kind in the UK, with the new high-level walkways giving people a unique perspective on All Souls’ architecture and stained glass windows. An area dedicated to the history of the building and the local area will give the town’s diverse population an opportunity to explore and understand the church and its role within the community more fully.

Carole Souter added:

“The inspirational plans for All Souls Church’s restoration will breathe new life into this historic building, ensuring that it takes its rightful place at the heart of the community it was built to serve.”

Loyd Grossman, Chairman, The Churches Conservation Trust, said:

"We are delighted! Historic churches such as All Souls are treasured features of our towns and countryside. These magnificent buildings are monuments to our history, our stories and society, but left unused they are at risk. This funding will enable us to save All Souls for future generations, to keep alive its history and spirit through contemporary community use. The transformation of All Souls also powerfully demonstrates the enormous potential these magnificent buildings have to serve communities today and I hope we can see more of these visionary schemes in the future.”

Delving deeper into our maritime past

The National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, the largest museum of its kind in the world, houses an internationally important maritime archive. Its iconic buildings, which also include the Royal Observatory and the 17th-century Queen's House, form part of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site and the collections explain Britain's global influence through the sea, ships, time and stars.

The unique archive includes a wealth of original manuscripts and records of history's great figures, such as Sir Francis Drake, Captain James Cook, Nelson and the Polar explorers. There are accounts relating to the Transatlantic slave trade, the settlement of Australia and the Empire Windrush, as well ss Titanic memorabilia.

Thanks to HLF's £5million grant, an elegant and inviting entrance will be created directly from Greenwich Park and much more of the collection and archive will be displayed in the new library, archive facilities and special exhibitions gallery.

Uncovering two millennia of Roman history

The Vindolanda Trust has some of the most important collections of 'real life' from the Roman world. Their museums are situated on the extensive remains of two Roman forts and civilian settlements on Hadrian's Wall - England's largest World Heritage Site.

HLF's £4million grant will link the two sites and the proposed new gallery space and education centre have been designed to inspire the next generation of young archaeologists. A significant element of Vindolanda's collection currently in storage will be on show for the first time.

Some of the most interesting artefacts to emerge from the sites are the Vindolanda Tablets – ancient 'postcards' written by Roman soldiers to family and friends back home. The collection also contains a famous birthday party invitation written by a commander's wife and another reveals that Roman soldiers wore underpants to keep warm in the Northern winter. These are currently held at the British Museum, but the project will enable selected tablets to be returned and displayed where they were written.

Europe's most influential landscape gardens

Stowe Landscape Gardens in Buckinghamshire was created by some of the 18th century's leading architects, sculptors and gardeners, including Capability Brown, John Vanbrugh and William Kent. With spectacular views, beautiful lakes, wooded valleys and over 40 temples and monuments, Stowe Gardens are a stunning example of an English landscape garden. It evolved from an English Baroque garden into a pioneering landscape park which has been recognised as Europe's most influential landscape gardens.

Thanks to a grant of £1.5million, the original entrance to the Garden will be reinstated. New Inn, built in 1717 to offer rest and refreshment to visitors, will be refurbished and the sights, smells and sounds of the original inn recreated. By transforming the visitor experience, people will enjoy a greater understanding of what it would have been like to visit Stowe in its heyday.

Top secrets unveiled

Bletchley Park in Milton Keynes is the historic site of secret British code breaking activities during World War Two and birthplace of the modern computer. It has been awarded HLF development funding of £460,500 towards a further potential application of £4.1million. Proposals include: repairing key buildings to highlight the crucial part the site played in the World War Two code breaking story; improving visitor facilities; and expanding the site's educational

programmes.
Stephen Fry, actor and author, commented:

“The news that Bletchley Park has the initial support of the Heritage Lottery Fund is simply wonderful. And yet, what should the Heritage Lottery Fund do if not exactly this? As each year passes it is becoming clearer and clearer just how vital a role in winning the war Bletchley played. Three things have become necessary: firstly, an apology to Alan Turing for how the nation he helped preserve turned its back on him and allowed his humiliation, neglect and suicide: secondly, national recognition and citation for all those who contributed to the unique and astonishingly dedicated, imaginative and skilful contribution played there: thirdly the preservation, maintenance and development of the present Bletchley Park house and grounds into a world class site. The Prime Minister’s apology on behalf of the nation to Alan Turing last month was the first step, the government announcement in May of Commemorative Badges for Bletchley Park veterans was the second and this momentous news of a Heritage Lottery Fund development grant is the third.”

Wentworth Castle is so worth it

Wentworth Castle in South Yorkshire has also been awarded a first-round pass of £220,000 towards a potential application of nearly £2.5million. The proposed project is to restore the rare Grade II* Victorian conservatory to its former glory. The conservatory will form a gateway to the
60-acre pleasure ground with a ruined gothic castle, Union Jack garden and extensive collection of rhododendrons.

Notes to Editors

[1]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.

[2]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. However, a first-round pass does not guarantee the applicant will receive a grant as the second-round application will still be in competition for funding, and no money is set aside at this stage. 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.