Diss Heritage Partnership wins Heritage Lottery Fund support

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The partnership, which comprises Diss Corn Hall Trust, the Town Council and Museum, aims to restore the Corn Hall and develop the Heritage Triangle surrounding it, to help regenerate the old town.

HLF has awarded a first-round pass for £1,522,300 including development funding of £60,900 to help the Diss Corn Hall project progress their plans to apply for the full grant. Work on the development project will start in early 2013, with the aim of submitting an application for the full grant in the autumn. This HLF grant represents more than half of the total project cost, and the partnership will now actively seek to secure further grant funding. If all goes according to plan, the restored Corn Hall and Heritage Triangle would be completed by mid-2015.

The extensive programme of work at the Corn Hall includes restoring the main hall and council chamber and creating a new foyer and box office. A gallery above will support heritage displays and operate as a resource / study centre in partnership with the museum. In the old town itself, street landscaping work will create ‘squares’ and areas where visitors can enjoy both the Mere and the astonishing range of historic buildings in Diss, which will be researched in depth and their stories linked to the development of the town.

Information boards at key locations, including empty shops, will provide year-round interest for visitors, whilst downloadable digital audio theatre, street performance and specific events will create additional highlights throughout the year.

Volunteering is a core part of the project, and includes opportunities for local people to help with historic research, learn how to maintain heritage buildings, or to work as ‘explainers’ for visitors on open days and at events. Education and heritage officers based at the Corn Hall will work with volunteers, local groups and schools, to involve as many local people as possible in Diss’ heritage.

The Corn Hall, which is Grade II listed, has been operating successfully as a performing arts venue for the last three years. The Heritage Triangle contains more than 100 listed buildings, including one Grade I and two Grade II*, an exceptional concentration of historic buildings in such a small area.

David Case, of Diss Heritage Partnership, said: “We’re delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us this support. It’s a tremendous vote of confidence in Diss. The late Poet Laureate Sir John Betjeman once described Diss as ‘the perfect market town’ but he also pointed out that ‘Diss doesn’t show itself at once; you have to go and look to find the treasures.’ This project will tackle those issues head-on, and help to transform Diss into a destination, a living library of market town life.”

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: "We’re extremely pleased to give initial support to the project, which aims to bring to life the rich history of the Corn Hall and surrounding Heritage Triangle for the benefit of the local community and visitors alike. We shall watch the developing plans with interest."

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

About Diss Heritage Partnership
The Diss Heritage Partnership brings together three organisations – Diss Corn Hall Trust, Diss Town Council and Diss Museum – working together to deliver this heritage project.

Diss Corn Hall Trust is a registered charity formed in 2009, responsible both for the day-to-day running of the Corn Hall, and also for the strategic development of the Corn Hall in its setting. The Corn Hall provides performing arts, cultural and heritage activities for local people, and is an active contributor to the local community through its support of developing young people and, for example, its participation in national Heritage Open Days.

Diss Town Council owns the Corn Hall and many of the public spaces within the Heritage Triangle. It is responsible for the wider context of the project liaising with third parties, including district and county councils and other public and private bodies to ensure coherent development of the project in line with local strategy.

Diss Museum, also a registered charity and run mainly by volunteers, has an exemplary track record of developing heritage interpretation at its premises located in the Heritage Triangle. The museum has full accredited status, winning national awards for its work.

Further information

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