Dumfries and Galloway Arts venues given major backing

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Dumfries's historic Theatre Royal is to be restored and extended with the help of a grant announced today by the Heritage Lottery Fund. HLF also awarded first-round passes for projects to create a new nationally significant art gallery in Kirkcudbright and to carry out essential repairs to Kirkcudbright Parish Church. As well as restoring and altering these buildings to make them sustainable, work will be done to research and preserve their colourful histories.

Colin McLean, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland, said: "Cultural venues have a hugely important part to play in the life of our communities. They are held dear in our hearts as they are interwoven with the history and cultural traditions of a place giving it a unique sense of identity. The Heritage Lottery Fund is delighted to help Dumfries and Kirkcudbright share their rich histories in creative and performing arts so that they can continue to inspire and involve people in memorable and rewarding experiences which enrich their lives."

In April 2013, the Heritage Lottery Fund recognised that Dumfries & Galloway had not submitted as many applications as other areas in Scotland so designated it a priority area and set about encouraging more heritage projects to come forward for funding. One year on, the initiative has been a great success with over £800,000 of confirmed HLF funding awarded to 15 projects in the area.

Colin McLean continues: "There is huge potential to showcase the heritage and culture of Dumfries & Galloway and we are pleased that, working with the Council, we have encouraged local organisations and groups to come up with projects that involve them in the history of their community."

The Theatre Royal Dumfries
Built in 1790, the Theatre Royal in Dumfries is Scotland's oldest working theatre with links stretching back to Robert Burns, who helped finance its initial construction, and JM Barrie who was a regular attendee. HLF has awarded a grant of £322,300 for a project which aims to secure a sustainable future for the voluntary run theatre, as well as opening up its history to the public.

Its vast collection of props, scripts, costumes and artefacts depicting 200 years of trends in drama, literature, fashion and set design will be used to tell its story through interpretation, exhibitions and outreach work. The theatre will be repaired and restored and the adjoining building converted to house new storage for the collections as well as an exhibition showcasing its history. There will be a new café and bar while an educational studio and digital media suite will be built as part of a wider educational programme to encourage people to engage with the history of live theatre in the town.

Kirkcudbright Art Gallery
HLF has given its initial support for a £969,100 bid to transform the Town Hall in Kirkcudbright into a gallery of national significance showcasing the town's artistic heritage - the town being one of only two recognised artist colonies in the UK. The project will save the town hall, which is currently at risk while also providing better access, care and interpretation to the council's collections of paintings, drawings, print-making, furniture, photographs and ceramics,

including works by members of the Glasgow Boys and artists from the Scottish Colourist movement such as SJ Peploe.

Kirkcudbright Parish Church
HLF has given Kirkcudbright Parish Church a first-round pass for a bid of £96,500 for a project to undertake urgent repairs to the south wall and windows of the church building. Complementing the building works will be a programme of heritage activities including the production of a leaflet documenting the history of the church.

HLF would love to hear from anyone in Dumfries & Galloway who has an idea for a heritage project, large or small. You can contact the HLF team in Edinburgh on 0131 225 9450 or email Scotland@hlf.org.uk, where someone from the Development team will be happy to talk to you about your project.

Notes to editors

A first-round pass means the project meets the 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 application with a first-round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their scheme.

To date HLF has invested over £588million in Scotland's heritage.

Further information

Heritage Lottery Fund: Shiona Mackay on 01786 870 638 / 07779 142 890 or Jon Williams on 020 7591 6035, email: jonw@hlf.org.

Theatre Royal Dumfries: Alan Henry on 07720 062 744, email: alanhenry2001@yahoo.co.uk.

Kircudbright Art Gallery: David Lockwood on 01378 245 916, email: david.lockwood@dumgal.gov.uk.

Kirkcudbright Parish Church: Alexander Kinnell on 01557 331 683, email: ladywell83@yahoo.co.uk.