Paisley's economic future boosted with £1.5m investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund

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The Townscape Heritage Initiative is a unique approach to urban regeneration and sustainable development using heritage as the catalyst. Town centres are regenerated by repairing and giving new uses to historic buildings, making them more appealing places to invest, work and live in. To date HLF has invested almost £40million in 30 town centres across Scotland, levering many millions more in partnership funding and bringing real economic benefit to the towns as well as restoring community pride.

Paisley has an outstanding architectural heritage as a result of its long and diverse historical development dating back to the 6th century. It thrived in the 18th century as a result of the textile and other manufacturing industries, then again in the 19th century with the growth of the thread mills, when it grew to become Scotland's largest town.

However, Paisley has suffered severe economic decline as manufacturing industries have closed and its retail centre has faced strong competition from Glasgow and Braehead. The THI focuses on the southern area of the town centre and includes the restoration of a vacant former fire station, repairs to tenement properties as well as Paisley Arts Centre, a shopfront restoration scheme and four public realm projects.

Commenting from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Colin McLean, said: "Our research shows that these THI schemes can really help turn local economies around, not only by improving how historic towns look and feel, but also by prompting business start-ups and creating new jobs. Investment like this goes well beyond looking after the bricks and mortar of a building.

"Last year we started a drive to encourage more applications for grants from Renfrewshire so we are delighted that a project such as this has come through. Today is a step towards a brighter future for Paisley and for the people that live and work there."

Derek Mackay, Leader of Renfrewshire Council, said: "I am delighted to receive this grant award. Regenerating Paisley town centre is a top priority for Renfrewshire Council and the Heritage Lottery Funds will provide a welcome boost which will allow us to tackle the issues involved in the preservation and enhancement of the outstanding built heritage of Paisley.

"Renfrewshire Council has a strong record of achievement on protecting Paisley's architectural heritage. We have helped safeguard over 250 listed buildings from any inappropriate development.

"Like other town centres, Paisley has challenges to overcome. However, an integrated partnership is already delivering on a range of measures to improve the environment, transport and business involvement to boost the town centre's prospects. This significant support from the HLF recognises the value of Paisley's past and is a vote of confidence in the town's future."