£1.4million Lottery funding for Gwynedd's culture and heritage

15/10/2013

The funding awarded to Gwynedd Council in partnership with Bangor University will assist the creation of a new 'culture quarter' in Bangor, with the city's Bishop's Palace at its heart.

The grant awarded by the HLF will go towards the relocation and the redevelopment of the Gwynedd Museum and Art Gallery, making the city's previously unseen collections more accessible whilst also bringing one of Bangor's oldest buildings back into the attention of the public.

Jennifer Stewart, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Wales, said: "Some elements of Bangor's long history are proudly visible to people who visit and live in the city, but other aspects, such as the excellent collections currently held by Bangor University and the Bishop's Palace itself have not been seen for a long time. It is excellent that HLF funding will now help transform this building and the surrounding area so that this history and heritage can once again be explored and enjoyed by all."

Pontio partnership

The collection currently held at the old canonry in Bangor will be transferred to the Bishop's Palace once the building has been renovated. Recognised as the oldest collection in north Wales and one of the most significant collections on Wales' history outside Sain Ffagan, the collections will be reinterpreted and redisplayed to make them more informative and engaging. The art gallery space will be doubled from existing space and a dedicated Learning Space form an important part of the capital works.

Having previously received a development grant from HLF the project has already started preparatory work, working closely with Bangor University and the Pontio project to ensure a strong presence for the collections and new learning opportunities. In addition, fundraising during the development phase of the project resulted in £400,000 grant from the Môn Menai Regeneration fund.

Councillor John Wynn Jones, Gwynedd Council Cabinet Member for Economy welcomed the HLF funding and Gwynedd Council Leader, Councillor Dyfed Edwards added: "This is excellent news – the Lottery funding will form a key part of the funding package that will allow us to realise the much-anticipated changes to the Gwynedd Museum and Art Gallery. This is an important milestone for an ambitious partnership project, which will help us safeguard and improve the way our culture and heritage is cared for, shared and presented to communities across Gwynedd."

Gwynedd-wide engagement

In addition to the transformation of the Bishop's Palace, the new museum and gallery will also act as a hub for the county of Gwynedd. Five locations from across the county will be able to showcase regionally and locally significant collections. Through additional staff capacity and the development of a strong volunteer structure, the project will also ensure the delivery of activities, projects, training, exhibitions, digital collections and apps as a way of engaging and connecting people of all ages with their culture and heritage.

The hope is that the project will bring about a county-wide transformation of how people get involved with their heritage and allow for people from all parts of the region to tell and share the ‘story of Gwynedd’. Dr David Roberts, Registrar of Bangor University, said: “This is fantastic news for the region and for the university and the new museum and art gallery will complement magnificently the nearby Pontio arts and innovation development.”

Jeremy Yates RCA, on behalf of the Friends of Gwynedd Museum and Art Gallery stated: “The Friends wholeheartedly welcome this news and anticipate a close involvement with the museum and gallery in its new setting of the Bishop’s Palace in Bangor. We hope to be at the heart of the growing volunteering network vital to the success of the venture, and look forward to contributing with the local expertise and experience of our membership.”

Notes to editors

About the Bishop’s Palace and collections:

- The Grade II listed Bishop's Palace owned by Gwynedd Council is the oldest surviving building in Bangor after the cathedral. Dating from the 16th century, it is the only substantially intact Bishop's Palace surviving from the late mediaeval period in Wales. The RCAHMW confirms that the building is of 'exceptional interest' and that its significance needs to be clearly stated.
- Gwynedd Museum and Art Gallery is managed by Gwynedd Council. Dating from 1884, it is one of the oldest museums in Wales, telling the story of the social history of the area. Collections have a largely regional interest and include furniture, textiles, domestic and agricultural items.
- Bangor University's 'hidden collections' include art, ceramics, traditional Welsh musical instruments, ethnographic musical instruments as well as natural history items. The collection is in the top 10 university collection of cultural assets in the UK, with some of national and international significance, particularly the collection of musical instruments which is unique in Wales.
- Gwynedd Museum and Art Gallery is the only organisation with a brief to deliver a heritage service to the whole of Gwynedd. There is currently no way of recording or sharing the memories, objects, stories and photographs of the diverse and dispersed communities who live there.

Plans for the project include:
A new 'Hub and Spoke' model of heritage provision with a revitalised GMAG at the Bishop's Palace, Bangor, will result in a dynamic new museum and a new network of ‘spoke’ organisations located in communities across the region.

The five primary ‘spokes’ will be based in Llanberis, Llanbedrog, Dolgellau, Blaenau Ffestiniog and Tywyn.

Linking the heritage, tourism and economic regeneration agendas, proposed work will:

- improve awareness and learning about built heritage in Bangor through the renovation and conservation of the Bishop's Palace
- create a dynamic new museum and art gallery in the centre of Bangor in the Bishop's Palace, plans also include the creation of a cafe and shop.
- interpret and improve physical and virtual access to the GMAG and Bangor University's collections throughout the county by creating a new network of heritage organisations through a 'hub and spoke' model.
- develop a sustainable volunteer network by involving community groups and individuals in designing new interpretation and using new technologies.

Further information

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