Falkirk’s economic future boosted with £2m investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund

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The Heritage Lottery Fund has earmarked funding1 of £2million including development funding of £50,000 as part of its hugely successful Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)2. This is the biggest HLF award to be made in the Falkirk area.

From historic battle site, to thriving 18th century cattle market town to the engine house of the industrial revolution, Falkirk has a fascinating architectural heritage. However, the decline of heavy industry and the effects of the current recession have taken their toll and some prominent buildings are now in poor condition tarnishing the historic character of the town.

Regeneration activity in Falkirk town centre commenced in 2010 with a Scottish Government Town Centre Regeneration Fund award and Falkirk Council is committed to seeking new investment opportunities to protect and grow one of Scotland’s top historic town centres.

The Townscape Heritage Initiative is a unique approach to urban regeneration and sustainable development using heritage as the catalyst. The historic core of Falkirk will be regenerated by repairing and giving new uses to buildings, making it a more appealing place to invest, work, and live in.

The symbolic 140ft Town Steeple will be restored as part of the THI with opportunities for its vacant floor space, originally the town’s prison cells, to be brought back into use. Some of the town’s earliest streets, such as Kirk Wynd and Vicar Street will also benefit from improvements with a number of shop fronts restored and historic architectural detail reinstated.

Integral to the THI will be a programme of training opportunities for local people and businesses working in partnership with the Falkirk Business Improvement District, Falkirk Council’s training unit and Historic Scotland. Additionally, an extensive interpretive programme to promote and tell the Falkirk Story will be delivered in partnership with the Falkirk Community Trust and Falkirk Local Historical Society.

Today’s announcement comes on the back of the Council’s successful delivery of the THI in nearby Bo’ness which has transformed and rejuvenated its traditional historic town centre. With the help of a £1.3m grant from HLF, over 1,500 sq m of derelict floor space has been brought back into use, 35 shop fronts have been improved, and new paving, lighting and signage have contributed to the town’s renewed confidence and pride.

The restoration of the Hippodrome, Scotland’s first-purpose build cinema from its derelict state to a thriving entertainment venue has had a huge impact on Bo’ness bringing people back into the town and boosting trade. As a result, new businesses are opening and others expanding, signalling a brighter future for this historic port.

Commenting from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Colin McLean, said; “Investment like this goes well beyond the bricks and mortar of any building. THI schemes can really help turn local economies around, not only by improving how they look and feel, but by creating new jobs and training opportunities and encouraging visitors to the town. Falkirk Council has put together an impressive project which will benefit many. It will be wonderful to see new life breathed into the town’s

buildings and we are delighted that it is our Townscape Heritage Initiative that is helping drive it forward."

Rhona Geisler, Director of Development Services at Falkirk Council commented: "Falkirk Council is committed to the regeneration of its town centres and has already delivered significant projects in Stenhousemuir and Boness. The regeneration of Falkirk town centre is a major task. It has a rich heritage and the local community has a real stake in its future. There is a huge amount of work to do. However this funding is vital as it will allow us to develop and enhance many historical parts of the town centre while training young people and developing local businesses. It is a significant award and one that will undoubtedly provide real benefits to the Falkirk community in the years ahead".'

Falkirk is a development priority area for the Heritage Lottery Fund and as such they are working with Falkirk Council and many local groups to make sure they make the most of the heritage lottery grants available to them. To date, the Heritage Lottery has funded 46 projects across the Falkirk region bringing real economic benefit in terms of skills, training, and visitors, while opening up the area's heritage for people to enjoy and take pride in.

Notes to editors

HLF's Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) encourages partnerships of local organisations to carry out repairs and other works to a number of historic buildings, structures or spaces. Grants range from £500,000 to £2m. To date, HLF has invested over £214m regenerating towns that have suffered serious social and economic decline. The deadline for first-round applications is 31 October and decisions will be made in March 2013.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. To date it has invested over £536million in Scotland's heritage.

The Hippodrome is Scotland's oldest purpose-built cinema. Opened in 1912, and an A-listed historic building, it is the masterpiece of architect Matthew Steele, who left Bo'ness with a remarkable built heritage of early 20th century design styles. The £1.95m initial restoration programme was funded by The Heritage Lottery Fund, Falkirk Council through the Townscape Heritage Initiative, Historic Scotland, the Architectural Heritage Fund, Falkirk Environment Trust and the Manifold Trust. The restoration programme has seen extensive works undertaken, both inside and out, including the installation of new seating and repair and reupholstering of some old seats; reinstatement of the 1926 decorative scheme and repair of the original copper dome above the manager's office. The exterior and interior of the building were refurbished including the re-harling of the distinctive white exterior and re-roofing of the cinema.

My Future's in Falkirk is an innovative 10 year economic development initiative which is transforming the Falkirk area into a diverse and modern economy and a desirable place to work, live and visit. The area already makes a major contribution to the Scottish economy through its position as the hub of the chemicals industry, its extensive transportation links and its growing reputation as a tourism and leisure destination. My Future's in Falkirk is a partnership between Falkirk Council, BP, Scottish Enterprise and INEOS with funding support from European Regional Development Fund.

Further information

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