Fishermen’s project nets Heritage Lottery Fund grant

29/11/2010

The Rye Partnership, working with the local Fishermen’s Association, youth organisations, housing associations and the town’s museum will be recruiting volunteers from among the population to carry out research and a series of interviews leading to a public exhibition next autumn.

Younger members of the community will be recording interviews, collecting personal stories from fishermen and their families and exploring the ways in which the industry has helped shape the development of the town.

In William the Conqueror’s day Rye was a fishing community almost completely surrounded by the sea. The coastline is now some two miles away but the town still operates as a fishing port, aided by its position on three rivers. From the 13th century Rye formed an important part of the south coast’s defensive chain – the Cinque Ports – providing safe anchorage, fighting ships and men to crew them.

During the 18th century the town’s prosperity was said to depend as much on smuggling as fishing with smugglers’ hoards stashed in old cellars linked by a network of secret tunnels.

Historic artefacts, documents, story boards and photographs will be augmented by the recorded interviews at an exhibition to be held at the Rye Creative Centre next September. In 2012 a permanent exhibition will be created for Rye Museum. In addition, a heritage ‘toolkit’ will be produced describing how the project was conceived and run so as to help other organisations who may wish to produce something similar for their areas.

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East England, said: “Few people may understand that the fishing vessels they see today moored on the river outside the town are a direct link with Rye’s impressive maritime heritage. This project will set the record straight and also encourage local young people to take an active part in exploring these connections by creating displays for a wider audience.”

For The Rye Partnership Chairman, Councillor Keith Glazier, said: “We are pleased that the Heritage Lottery Fund have recognised the importance of the fishing industry in Rye and have given us the opportunity to create this intergenerational project. For the young people of Rye this is a fantastic way of them learning new skills and to share the experience of discovering about their heritage with other members of the community. I am sure that by next autumn they will have produced an exhibition that will give many visitors a new appreciation of the fishermen of Rye and the town which they have helped to shape.”

Amber Rudd, MP for Hastings & Rye, welcomed the grant. She said: “The harbour in Rye has a fascinating and diverse past which has been intertwined with the town for centuries. I am delighted that the HLF has recognised the immense cultural value of our local history and the tremendous work that the Rye Partnership does to promote and preserve it. This project will engage the whole community and leave a lasting record for future generations to enjoy and look back on. I look forward to attending the exhibition when it opens next September!”

Notes to editors

The Rye Partnership was established in 1997 as a Local Partnership, a government initiative designed to encourage local people to participate in the regeneration of their area, and to develop the projects of benefit to their community. In March 2003 the Rye Partnership Limited was incorporated as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, but it still has its roots firmly planted within the local area with representation from a wide number of partners crossing all sections of the community.

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. HLF has supported more than 33,900 projects, allocating over £4.4billion across the UK, with over £428 million granted in the South East alone.

Further information

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