Funding for George Elmy Heritage Project

13/04/2011

The project, led by the East Durham Heritage Group, will explore the rich maritime, social and industrial history of East Durham, focussing particularly on the George Elmy lifeboat. Built in 1949, the boat has a long history. In November 1962, the boat was involved in a terrible accident that had a huge impact on the local community; the boat still remains of huge importance today.

The vessel will be fully restored back to its original state and will be used as an interactive learning tool for the surrounding community in the run up to the 50th anniversary of the George Elmy disaster in 2012. It will form the basis of a heritage learning programme which aims to encourage local people, including school children and community groups, to learn more about this fascinating part of their local heritage. A series of workshops, activities and educational sessions will be put in place, exploring in detail the boats history and the effect it had on the people living and working in the area at the time.

The East Durham Heritage Group is run by 12 local dedicated volunteers who want to share their passion for the vessel with as many people as possible. They will engage new volunteers to assist with all parts of the project.

Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North East, Ivor Crowther, said: “People are at the heart of all HLF projects and this one demonstrates that perfectly. Run by volunteers who really care about their heritage and who want to involve as many people as possible. The George Elmy Lifeboat is of huge local significance and deserves to be restored and used as an educational tool for the community. We are delighted to be able to support this project and the people who have worked so hard to make it happen.”

A spokesman for The East Durham Heritage Group, said: “This is very welcome news; knowing that our application has been approved means that we are a significant step closer towards bringing The George Elmy back to Seaham to complete the journey that it started on the afternoon of 17 November 1962 and which was so tragically terminated within sight of safety. Completion of the restoration forms only a part of our plans to bring heritage knowledge to people and visitors of the area.”

Notes to editors

"We must thank all those that have helped us reach this point in the project, while there are those that might be said to be the public face of our organisation there are many more who work tirelessly and unseen.

"Our thanks also must go to the ASDA Foundation, The Sir James Knott Trust, Durham Heritage Coast, The County Durham Foundation, The Co-operative Community Fund, Murton Heritage Society and Parish Council, Seaham Town Council, the Chairman of Durham County Council, Councillor Mr. Mac Williams and those within Durham County Council, Department of Regeneration and Economic Development based in Easington Village especially Lynsey Garraghan and Libby Mahoney and their colleagues without whose help, we would not have succeeded.

"We must thank the adults and children of Timesteps Dance Group who have fund raised so vigorously on our behalf and we must not forget to thank those within the Heritage Lottery Fund for their advice and encouragement.

"Lastly, a great vote of thanks must go to the people of Seaham and the descendants of those lost in the tragedy for their unstinting support and donations for the project, without their help our project would not have reached this stage."

Have your say: HLF's three-month consultation **Shaping the future – for heritage, for everyone** is now live on our website and all views will help shape HLF's strategy from 2013 to 2019. This is people's chance to tell us what they think we should continue to do and what we should do differently. To respond to the consultation and to view the video go to the consultation page. Deadline is 26 April 2011.

Further information

The East Durham Heritage Group and The George Elmy Heritage Project. www.seahamlifeboats.oneuk.com

Ernie Cooper at ernie_cooper@hotmail.com or pop along to the Centre at 10 Church Street, Seaham.