Causeway's Heritage receives 'Giant' £3million Lottery Boost

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded a grant of £3million to the National Trust to support the development of new visitor facilities at the Giant's Causeway, it was announced today. The award will aid the provision of a visitor centre, associated site management and a wide-ranging programme of activities at Northern Ireland's premier tourist attraction and only World Heritage Site (WHS).

With conservation at the heart of the project, the HLF grant will be used to develop new visitor facilities that complement the surrounding landscape, ensuring the sustainable management of this important heritage asset. The funding will support the introduction of imaginative interpretation that will greatly expand the opportunities to learn about the area's history, geology and biodiversity. Visitor guides and live storytelling will be used to enhance the visitor experience and reflect the relationship between the local community and the causeway stones. New trail paths will be developed to provide access and links to other areas of the WHS and a sustainable transport plan will be implemented to ease pressure and remove traffic congestion in the area.

Additionally, an extensive programme of outreach activities will be developed to encourage the local community to become involved in the project. Up to 100 volunteers will be recruited to act as welcome hosts, storytellers, wardens and support staff and local primary schools, colleges and universities will be invited to take part in a series of educational and environmental programmes.

The announcement is a welcome boost for the nationally and internationally important heritage of the Giant's Causeway and the Causeway Coastal area and will allow the National Trust to begin work on-site to deliver the new facilities and enhanced visitor experience by 2012.

Commenting on the award, Chair of the HLF Northern Ireland Committee, Ronnie Spence, said: "This announcement is fantastic news for the people of Northern Ireland and highlights once again the positive impact our heritage has on our future. Not only does this investment provide a real boost to the local economy through the creation of employment opportunities, but for the first time, we have the opportunity to adopt a holistic approach to the management of the Giant's Causeway to ensure that our only World Heritage Site is protected and conserved for future generations.

"With a strong focus on education and participation, this exciting project will enable people to learn more about, and become involved with, the spectacular natural and cultural heritage of the area. With HLF's support, the Trust can now progress their plans to provide a world-class experience for visitors to this world-class attraction, and we are delighted to be involved."

Celebrating the announcement of the £3million funding from Heritage Lottery Fund, National Trust Director for Northern Ireland, Hilary McGrady, added: "This is a landmark announcement for the Giant's Causeway, World Heritage Site, and indeed the people of Northern Ireland. I am thrilled that Heritage Lottery Fund has so significantly supported this major project which will see the Giant's Causeway protected and a world class visitor centre and experience in place."

This decision gives the project, and National Trust, a huge boost.

“Since taking the lead in this project, less than 2 years ago, we have made real progress. With funding from DETI through Northern Ireland Tourist Board, nearly in place, as well as agreement with Moyle Council imminent, we will actually be able to start works on site in a matter of weeks.

“Heritage Lottery Fund in announcing this funding of £3million, has today ensured that the Giant’s Causeway and Causeway Coast World Heritage Site will truly be sustained, transformed and forever treasured,” Hilary concluded.

Notes to editors

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 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

Since 1994 the Heritage Lottery Fund has committed £126 million and made over 1000 awards to projects across Northern Ireland.

Further information

Julie Halliday, HLF Northern Ireland on 07733 100 674 or julieh@hlf.org.uk

Katie Owen, HLF Press Office on 020 7591 6036 or katieo@hlf.org.uk

Maurica Lavery, National Trust on 07880 804 003 or maurica.lavery@nationaltrust.org.uk