Govanhill People’s History Project

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The ‘Govanhill People’s History Project’ will recruit 15 local volunteers who will collect the stories of people who have lived in Govanhill all their lives, along with those who have moved here from other places in the UK and abroad.

The idea is to celebrate Govanhill’s unique diversity and its important role as a gate of entry for new Scots. The project will explore the contribution of migrants to Scottish society, the difficulties they had and how Govanhill was a place of hope and personal development for many of them.

Bob Marshall of the Govanhill People’s History Project, said: “We too-often hear negative stories about Govanhill. There’s no doubt that people who live here have problems the same as people anywhere else - but this is a unique area in Scotland with a lot to celebrate.

“Since the second half of the 19th century it’s been a springboard for migrants from all over the world. Different people have arrived at different times - from other parts of the Lowlands, from the Highlands and Islands, from Ireland, from the Indian sub-continent and from Europe. Many of them saw Govanhill as a great area - place where they could build a better, safer life their families.

“Their history is the history of Glasgow and of Scotland. It’s important that we record it for posterity and show how people from all backgrounds have contributed to Scottish life.”

The volunteers will be given training and will then aim to interview a total of 225 people who either live in Govanhill, or who have lived in the area for a while and moved on. Interviews will be done in a variety of different languages.

They will set up a series of eight focus groups, bringing people together to share their stories.

And the volunteers will also do research in public archives, looking at how public services and private business have grown and changed in the area over the decades, giving a wider context to the individual stories.

The project received £50,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and will be supported from the Scottish Oral History Centre at Strathclyde University and Glasgow Life’s museums and libraries service.

Colin McLean, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland, said: “The Heritage Lottery Fund is delighted to support this ambitious and diverse project as it will not only capture vital memories but in doing so will give different sections of the community the opportunity to meet, forge new friendships and learn new skills. Together they can celebrate, and take pride in, all that has made Govanhill what it is today while providing a unique record of the area for others to enjoy.”

Today, people with an interest in the project from different backgrounds came together at the Dixon Halls on Cathcart Road.

Between 1871 and 1891 the Halls were the civic hub of Govanhill and the neighbouring area of Crosshill, hosting the

two burgh councils.

At the end of the project, the work done by the volunteers will be published in a book and CD, with summaries in different languages.

Material will also be hosted on a website where people can look at it for themselves and even make their own contributions. And there will be a lasting legacy, with a special heritage sound trail, where people can download a podcast that they can use as they walk around the area.

Further information

People who are interested in becoming a Govanhill People's History volunteer – or who have stories to tell about their lives in Govanhill and Crosshill – can contact the project by contacting Linda Fleming on 0141 423 5035 or email linda@communityrenewal.org.uk.