Grant gives green light to tramway learning centre

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The project has been made possible thanks to a grant of almost £900,000 confirmed by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The Stone Workshop, which is currently not used because of a dangerous roof, will now be repaired and used as an exhibition and learning centre for the Museum. Built in 1841, the two-storey building, stands in the heart of the Tramway Museum site. It was originally used as a smithy and wagon works for Stephenson's one-metre gauge mineral railway to transport limestone from what was then Crich Cliff Quarry to kilns at Ambergate.

The restored building will house an exhibition focusing on the social changes that took place during the Industrial Revolution, and the impact this had on the development of public transport. The exhibition will link to a learning centre that will contain new equipment and facilities, and allow school parties to make use of the extensive photographic archive held at the Museum.

The learning centre will be in use throughout the year, providing improved facilities for schools and families and also extend educational opportunities to the community at large as well as special interest groups, such as people with physical and learning disabilities.

Due to a fault in the original design the roof of the Stone Workshop is in danger of collapse. The restoration work will involve removing the roof to install an internal, load-bearing steel framework. The original roof will then be put back and the external appearance of the building will be unaffected.

Christopher Pennell, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands Committee, said: "The creation of a new exhibition and learning centre has the potential to inspire a new generation to explore the industrial heritage of the East Midlands starting with the story of the development of public transport in the Museum on the hill and continuing in the Lower Derwent Valley a mile below, a World Heritage Site focussing on the early creation of the factory system."

Commenting on the project, Museum Curator, Glynn Wilton, said: "The new Stone Workshop Exhibition and Learning Centre will not only preserve a unique, historically important building but it will also create a new exciting exhibition space and bring education into the heart of the Museum with the new learning facility."

Notes to editors

George Stephenson chose Crich Cliff Quarry to supply limestone for his iron smelting businesses. The stone was transported via his narrow gauge railway to kilns at Ambergate alongside the North Midland Railway that Stephenson was building from Derby to Rotherham and Leeds.

The National Tramway Museum was established at the former quarry in Crich in 1959, and now receives 100,000 visitors annually. Since its establishment the Tramway Museum Society has drawn its members from men and women of all age groups and all sectors of the community, working together in different ways to create the tramway museum.

The Museum has a fleet of more than 70 tramcars from Britain and other countries. It also has associated collections of photographs, publications and related artefacts. A one-mile tramline operates through the open-air former-quarry site

passing a period townscape comprising a number of historic buildings and items of street furniture brought to the site and re-erected.

The Heritage Lottery Fund grant is for £893,500. The sum was earmarked as a Stage One Pass in September 2008. A sum of £48,100 was awarded as a development grant to support the Tramway Museum Society in drawing together final plans for the Stone Workshop project.

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 39,900 projects, allocating over £4.4 billion across the UK, including £227million to the East Midlands alone.

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