Heritage Lottery funding boost for Gwynedd’s Heritage

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The project entitled ‘Engaging Collections: Widening access to Gwynedd’s Heritage’ will provide funding to develop a project that will eventually transform the current museum and gallery in Bangor and Gwynedd, make collections more accessible and the communities of Gwynedd becoming more involved in the collections and their interpretation.

The project has been developed jointly by Gwynedd Council and Bangor University, who are working together in partnership to safeguard and improve the cultural and heritage offer within Bangor and the region.

This Round 1* support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) will enable Gwynedd Council and Bangor University to develop plans for the project and progress to the second round of the HLF application process. They have up to two years to submit detailed plans and apply for the £1.3million HLF grant that they are seeking for the £2.1million project. Plans include relocating the existing Gwynedd Museum and Gallery to the Bishop’s Palace (also known as the Town Hall) in Bangor. The Bishop’s Palace would be renovated to become a welcoming, open, physically accessible museum and art gallery with improved visitor and educational facilities.

Councillor John Wynn Jones, Cabinet Member for Economy and Community at Gwynedd Council said: “This is a large scale and ambitious partnership project which aims to integrate and connect the build heritage of Bangor, Gwynedd Museum and Bangor University collections with community heritage right across Gwynedd.

“It’s a project for the whole of Gwynedd and will involve community groups and individuals in the interpretation of Gwynedd’s heritage and culture, at wide ranging venues throughout the county and use the latest technology to share artefacts and stories.

“Thanks to funding from HLF, Gwynedd Council and Bangor University, and the support provided by the Friends of the museum, we will be able to develop an exciting project that will ensure that Gwynedd’s story is given the interpretation and status that it deserves and further promote the Council’s aims of making Gwynedd a great place to live and to visit.”

David Roberts, Bangor University Registrar, who chaired the Steering Group that supervised the development of the project, believes this was a significant milestone. He said: "This is excellent news, and a major boost to our efforts to secure the future of the Gwynedd Museum and Art Gallery, and to revitalise its activities. By collaborating with the University’s Pontio project, this will further enhance the cultural and heritage offer that will be available in Bangor and Gwynedd.”

Jennifer Stewart, Head of HLF in Wales, added: “As one of the oldest surviving buildings in Bangor, it is fitting that Bishop’s Palace should become home to one of the oldest museums in Wales and tell the story of the area’s social history. It is so important to see these hidden collections, which include the unique collection of musical instruments, opened up for people to explore and enjoy.

“We were impressed with plans to bring the collections to life through interactive displays and Smartphone apps. The proposed volunteer opportunities and education workshops will give the whole community the chance to get involved in their local history. We have awarded a first round pass in recognition of the project’s potential and the benefits it could bring to the local area. There is huge competition for our grants so Gwynedd Council and Bangor University now need to develop the plans fully in order to compete for a firm award.”

Notes to editors

A first-round pass means the project meets HLF’s criteria for funding and HLF believe it has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals.

However, a first-round pass does not guarantee the applicant will receive a grant as the second-round application will still be in competition for funding, and no money is set aside at this stage. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.

On occasion an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their scheme.

Further information

- **The Gwynedd Museum** is an accredited museum and is the only general museum with a brief to collect and care for items from across the county. The museum has been in its current building, the old Canonry since 1973 (the gallery since 1963). The old Canonry is a Grade II-listed building dating to the 1870s. The items within Gwynedd Museum were collected when Bangor University first opened in 1884, with collections being used as teaching aids. They were also collected to reflect a Welsh rural way of life which was thought to be fast disappearing – so the collections are wide-ranging and are a unique insight into life in north west Wales, from prehistory to the present.
- **The Bishop’s Palace** (Town Hall) is one of the oldest buildings in Bangor, (after the cathedral), and yet there is very limited access to or information about its importance. A Grade II-listed building which dates to the mid 16th century; it is the only substantially intact Bishop’s Palace surviving from the late medieval period in Wales. It is the oldest continuously occupied domestic building in Bangor, and is a direct link with the medieval settlement which was established in the immediate vicinity of the cathedral.
- **Bangor University’s collections** began as the University was established in 1884. The University is responsible for a major cultural heritage in the form of works of art, porcelain, musical instruments, furniture, timber and botanical samples and extensive zoological and geological collections.
- **Gwynedd** has a vast, varied and impressive history. This project will aim to develop a hub and ‘spoke’ approach, with the Museum and Gallery in Bangor providing the hub function. The project aims to develop and cooperate with ‘spokes’ (other museums and heritage centres) across Gwynedd and North West Wales which will also interpret the story of Gwynedd and work in partnership to identify and interpret key themes in the history of Gwynedd.

For further information please contact Nest Thomas, Principle Museums and Arts Officer on 01286 679 098.