Heritage and European funding to preserve historic building

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This renovation project to restore and preserve the Porthmeor Studio complex - the oldest in the country – will be funded by grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), English Heritage (EH), ERDF/Convergence and European Fisheries Fund (EFF).

For more than 200 years this timber-framed structure has been battered by Atlantic gales and the shifting sands of the beach, and the building needs urgent intervention to preserve it from loss.

This renovation project will repair the Porthmeor Studios and Cellars, giving them a sustainable future, whilst preserving the buildings important heritage features and ensuring that this close community of fishermen and artists can continue to work alongside each other for many years to come.

Alongside the restoration work, the HLF award of £525,000 will also support a package of education and outreach activities, giving more people the chance to learn about the history of the building itself, alongside the stories of the artists and fishermen who have worked here. One of the fishermen's cellars will also be opened to the public and will use a collection of historic fishing gear to tell the story of this important local industry.

Simon Timms, Chair of Heritage Lottery Fund South West Committee, said: "Porthmeor studios have been at the heart of St Ives industrial and cultural heritage for the last 100 years, by both telling the important story of Cornwall's fishing industry and by providing an inspiration to many internationally influential artists. This project provides a fantastic opportunity for us to preserve this precious asset and ensure that it can be enjoyed by local people, visitors and artists both now and far into the future."

Chris Hibbert, Manager of the Borlase Smart John Wells Trust, comments: "This is such good news, and is a very exciting time for Porthmeor Studios. These four awards will provide a major part of the funding we need, and will help to ensure that we can now complete the project. I am most grateful for all the help and advice we have received, and especially from Tamsin Daniel of Cornwall Council, and Claire Hurley from the Cornwall Development Company."

Andrew Vines, English Heritage Regional Director in the South West, said: "I am very pleased to announce a further grant for the conservation and repair of Porthmeor artists' studios. This special building epitomises the connection between the town, its artistic tradition and the fishing industry, and symbolises so much that is special about the South West. It was recently upgraded to Grade II in recognition of both the historic and cultural significance of the fishing lofts and internationally important artists studios. In total, we have given £250,000 towards this vital repair project, including funding structural repairs to ensure that this building's historic uses of fishing and painting can continue into the future."

Cornwall Development Company (on behalf of Cornwall Council) have been vital in assisting the Trust to secure £250k of EFF (European Fisheries Fund) and £643K of Convergence investment to improve the economic value and sustainability of Porthmeor Studios.

The European Fisheries Fund (EFF) is matching HLF to secure the continued use of the cellars by fisherman and provide them as a learning resource for visiting schools. The EFF investment will improve and upgrade the working

conditions for the tenant fishermen.

The secured ‘ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) Convergence’ investment will ensure that the studios, as well as being an important historical asset will also provide great economic value to the area with over 900 sq metres of fully renovated, broadband enabled, high quality workspace for artists, a community learning resource and a visitor attraction. The investment will also safeguard several jobs and stimulate the creation of a further 10 jobs in the next five years. A renovated Porthmeor Studios will be a key part of the creative industry in Cornwall.

Carleen Kelemen, Director of the Convergence Partnership Office for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, said: “Finding new and economically viable uses for our historically important buildings is a key part of the economic development agenda, a vital part of the conservation of our historic environment and helps us maintain the strength of our sense of place. The ERDF Convergence investment in Porthmeor Studios will provide much needed new and refurbished workspace for ambitious businesses that will help drive the economic recovery.”

In 1801 the people of St Ives built a wall to protect their town from being engulfed by sand. On Porthmeor beach this wall enabled the fishermen to create cellars and net lofts to process their large catches of pilchards and store their boats and nets. From the 1880s famous artists from around the world began using the lofts as studios, attracted by the extraordinary light their position afforded.

The artists started to arrive in the 1880s, and built their studios on top of the fishermen’s cellars. Since then, Porthmeor has provided workspace for several internationally important artists, including Ben Nicholson, Francis Bacon and Patrick Heron. In the 1930s the St Ives painting school opened in the building.

To this day 12 boats work out of Porthmeor and the fishermen use the cellars for repairing and setting their nets and storage of lobster pots, as artists continue to work in the studios - as they have done for over a century.

Notes to editors

The breakdown of funding being announced today:

• Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF): £525,000
• English Heritage (EH): £150,000
• ERDF/Convergence: £643,000
• European Fisheries Fund: £250,000

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms our heritage. Through their grant making, HLF aims to conserve the UK's diverse heritage for present and future generations to experience and enjoy; help more people, and a wider range of people, to take an active part in and make decisions about their heritage; and help people to learn about their own and other people's heritage. HLF has supported more than 28,800 projects, allocating over £4.3billion across the UK,

Cornwall Development Company is the economic development arm of Cornwall Council.

Further information

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