Historic Knole and its untold treasures

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Treasures ranging from the original 17th-century Knole settee, a solid silver table and fragile furniture from two royal palaces, right through to curiosities such as a royal stool of easement (an early form of ‘loo’, from the French lieux d’aisance) are among items that will be safeguarded for future generations as part of the project

Alongside major conservation work, the funding will include a new visitor centre, café, shop and community programmes, and also help Knole to work more closely with the local community and to expand the range of volunteering opportunities it can offer.

The grant will also fund the building of a world class conservation studio onsite at Knole. When completed in summer 2015, visitors will be able to watch experts carrying out painstaking conservation on furniture, paintings and other treasures from the house’s collection.

The studio will offer training in conservation, courses in heritage subjects and will play a vital part in securing the future of conservation skills in Britain.

As part of its plans, Knole will open previously unseen rooms, including the servants’ quarters, attic spaces, the Retainers Gallery, one of the last undiscovered long galleries in England, and the gatehouse tower with its panoramic views of the medieval deer park and North Downs.

Emma Slocombe, curator at Knole, comments: “Since acquiring Knole in 1946, the National Trust has faced an expensive battle with rain, damp, mould and insects on the building and its collections. We are grateful to the HLF and members of the public for their generous support. Now, with our emergency repairs approaching completion and our funding secure, we can start the real work of bringing this great house back to life, sharing with our visitors every stage in the process as we begin the next chapter in the story of Knole.”

Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East, added: “The moment you step across Knole’s threshold you can feel the weight of 600 years of history upon your shoulders: from the turbulent times of Henry VIII’s reign to the childhood memories of novelist Vita Sackville-West. The National Trust’s portfolio of heritage sites is extensive and we have been impressed with their commitment to refurbishing what could rightly be described as their jewel in the crown. With HLF’s support, the second phase of urgent repairs to the building’s fabric can now get going as well as the construction of a studio to provide visitors with new insights into the skilful process of conserving and protecting fragile and precious objects.”

To complete the project, the National Trust is continuing to raise funds from an ongoing public appeal and from other sources.

Notes to editors

Knole is one of Britain’s most important and complete historic homes with a colourful past as an Archbishop’s palace, former hunting ground of Henry VIII, home of the Sackville-West family and a literary inspiration for Virginia Woolf.

The house, itself covering four acres of ground, is home to a collection of 2,363 objects including furniture from Hampton Court Palace and Whitehall Palace.

The National Trust looks after more than 250,000 hectares of countryside, 710 miles of coastline and hundreds of special places across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Further information

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