Scottish historic town centres receive support

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The Heritage Lottery Fund has earmarked funding for the Viking settlement of Kirkwall in Orkney and the county town of Cupar in Fife as part of its hugely successful Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI). It also announced a grant of £1.7million to continue the revitalisation of the Parkhead Cross area of Glasgow in the run up to the Commonwealth Games.

With an investment of over £40m, HLF's Townscape Heritage Initiative has helped breath life back into 37 communities across Scotland, from seaside resorts to market towns. Such has been its success that this week HLF recommitted to the initiative while also launching a complementary and pioneering programme, called Heritage Enterprise, designed to unlock the commercial potential of redundant heritage buildings and sites.

With a budget of at least £25m per annum over five years, Heritage Enterprise will plug the funding gap where the development of an historic site or building is not commercially viable. With grants between £100,000 and £5m, it will enable not-for-profit organisations to work in partnership with the private sector to bring these assets back into viable economic use.

Colin McLean, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland, said: "The regeneration of town centres is an obvious way in which we as an organisation can make an important contribution to improving the economy of an area and the standard of living for the people resident there. Investing Lottery money to revitalise historic buildings at the heart of a community, not only makes a place more attractive to live, visit and invest in, it also provides jobs and training opportunities for local people. We are delighted to make these awards as part of our on-going commitment to preserving Scotland's heritage in a way in which is pertinent to the needs of today."

Kirkwall THI, Orkney
Orkney Islands Council awarded a first-round pass of £1.675m including a development grant of £50,000.

Founded around 1035, the Viking town and Royal Burgh of Kirkwall is the capital and administrative centre of the Orkney Islands. With its harbour and airport, it is the arrival place for ferries and flights from the UK and the departure point for other islands in Orkney. The town is small with narrow flag stoned streets dominated by the impressive St Magnus' Cathedral. Its remote island location has made it particularly vulnerable to the effects of recession. The THI project aims to reinvigorate Kirkwall's Viking identity bringing vacant historic properties back into use as well as improving shop fronts in the town centre. It follows the success of the current THI project in Stromness which won a special mention in the recent Scottish Empty Homes Awards.

Cupar THI, Fife
Fife Council awarded a first-round pass of £578,500 including a development grant of £28,500.

Cupar was a wealthy trading centre and county town over the 18th and 19th centuries although its roots date back to medieval times. The THI, to be managed in partnership with Fife Historic Buildings Trust, is designed to help reinstate Cupar as a vibrant market town. The town is characterised by many long, narrow pends, and stone buildings built from a particularly soft local sandstone. As well as works to preserve these features, the THI will enable repairs to be made to prominent historic buildings – in particular the Burgh Chambers – and will help the town tackle a prominent gap site in

the heart of the conservation area. The THI has a strong focus on training initiatives with each big project supporting programmes for local contractors, support for private and local authority apprentices in traditional skills, and training for the owners of older properties. There will be an additional emphasis on energy efficiency in historic buildings, with advice on offer to help owners save energy without damaging the significant historic features of a building.

Parkhead Cross (Phase 2), Glasgow
Glasgow City Council awarded a grant of £1,710,300.

Building on the success and confidence of its first THI scheme, a second phase of works will continue the regeneration of Parkhead Cross. The busy junction, with five roads converging was once the centre of a thriving and prosperous community which grew thanks to the wealth created from steel production. However with tenement clearances and increasing unemployment, 75% of the population moved away between 1951 and 1981, leaving Parkhead one of the most deprived areas of Scotland. The first THI scheme, which completed in December 2011, successfully restored and brought back into use three key listed buildings as well as improving 25 shop fronts around the cross. This second phase will build on that momentum and include properties in the newly extended conservation area such as Westmuir Street School, St Michaels Church and a further 15 shop fronts. Integral to the project is a community heritage initiative which includes training, education and participation.

Notes to editors

A Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) earmarked first-round pass means that money has been set aside by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the scheme in question. Competition at this stage is tough, and while it does not guarantee funding, it is an indication of positive support. The applicants can then progress to the second round and submit a further, fully-developed application to secure the full award. This early level of strong financial commitment means that THIs can build strong partnerships with the assurance that funding for their scheme is in place provided their final proposals develop well.

HLF's Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) encourages partnerships of local organisations to carry out repairs and other works to a number of historic buildings, structures or spaces. Grants range from £500,000 to £2m. To date, HLF has invested over £228m regenerating towns that have suffered serious social and economic decline.

Further information

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