History of Suffrage in Ulster Explored in New Project

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The award was made to Glenravel Local History Project and will support a programme of volunteer-led research into the history, development, activities, achievements and legacy of the local suffrage movement.

Suffragettes were political activists who campaigned for women's right to vote. Women from all social classes were involved in the suffrage movement as no woman, regardless of her position, could vote. They organised and took part in marches and demonstrations, often using militant tactics to raise awareness of their cause. While the legacy of the Suffragettes is still apparent today, little information exists about the history of the movement in Ulster.

The new 'Suffrage in Ulster' project will provide opportunities for the local community, including historical societies, arts groups and young people involved in the Community Empowerment Project, to become involved in a range of activities. The volunteers will receive training in local history and research skills, ranging from utilising the resources available at the local library and online, to conducting more detailed research of information held at the Public Record Office and National Archives in Dublin.

Using these newly acquired skills the volunteers will research the history of the local suffrage movement, from the formation of the first suffrage society in Belfast by Isabella Todd in 1876 to the passing of the Equal Franchise Act in 1928, which finally gave women equal voting rights with men. The movement's leading figures, the impacts of the First World War and the introduction and effects of the 'Cat and Mouse' Act, will also be explored by the participants during the one year project. The volunteers will use their findings to produce a booklet, an education pack for use by local schools and develop a website to share this untold heritage with wider audiences.

As Crumlin Road Gaol played an important part in the suffrage story – 'A' wing being where the Suffragette prisoners, incarcerated for crimes such as possession of explosive materials, were housed – training will also be delivered to the current tour guides of Old Belfast Prison to enable them to educate visitors about this part of the prison's history and the wider suffragette movement in Ulster.

Funding for the project was awarded through HLF's 'Your Heritage' programme which provides grants of up to £50,000 for projects that enable people to explore, protect and celebrate their own or other people's heritage.

Announcing support for the project, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, said: "This project will help to uncover the story of the suffrage movement in Ulster and create a permanent record of this heritage by exploring the personalities and key events which both directly and indirectly led to the extension of the vote to women.

"It's wonderful to support this project which, with participation and learning at its heart, will provide opportunities for the local community to become actively involved in the activities to research and share this fascinating aspect of our local heritage with wider audiences."

Joe Baker, on behalf of Glenravel Local History Project, said: "We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund have supported this scheme. The local Suffragettes are largely forgotten and most people focus instead on their activities in

London. At the end of this project we will have lots of new material on the local Suffrage movement and I think people will find it absolutely fascinating."

Notes to editors

HLF has grant-giving programmes to support both large and small heritage projects, and since 1994 has awarded £135million to projects across Northern Ireland. For more information about HLF's funding programmes.

Further information

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