HLF digs deep to support Lanarkshire mining project

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With no coordinated record of the impact of this once major industry on the South Lanarkshire region or its local communities, this ambitious project will save the artefacts, records and oral histories of the industry before the physical remains on the landscape and the first-hand memories disappear altogether. It will also introduce a new generation to the area's mining legacy. In a recent school exercise, a class of primary four pupils in Hamilton were asked "What is coal?" - 75% of them did not know the answer.

Called Pits, Ponies, People and Stories, the project will encourage communities to 'adopt a mine' and with professional support, research the history and significance of the site. The results will be brought together to present an account of the industry and how it shaped the history, economics and politics of the region.

Those taking part will be given the opportunity to train in new skills such as oral history interviewing, filming and editing, and using archives, particularly genealogy research. The project, which is expected to take two years, will result in an almanac, DVD, children's pop-up book and a touring exhibition. A schools' education pack will also be developed with the help of a local children's panel.

Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland, said "We are delighted to give our initial approval to this project. As the physical scars relating to mining in South Lanarkshire disappear at an ever-increasing rate, so too does the history attached to them. This is a wonderful opportunity to re-engage people with that history, learning how their community developed into what it is today while providing an important record for the region."

Councillor Mary Smith, South Lanarkshire Council's Chair of Education Resources Committee, added "This is an important and fascinating project involving 30 schools and communities across South Lanarkshire. Working together we have a superb opportunity to record and save for posterity information and material on our industrial heritage and community roots. This heritage is being eroded day by day and by involving our schools and communities in this we will preserve not only the historical data but also the social and community heritage for future generations. I believe the pupils will learn a great deal by taking part in the Pits and Ponies project."

South Lanarkshire is one of HLF's priority areas as it has not come forward with as many heritage projects as other areas of Scotland. To date, HLF has invested over £18,800,000 in 95 projects across the region but there is the potential to untap much more.

HLF is working hard with lots of local groups to make sure that they make the most of the lottery grants available to them. The area has an amazing history – its industry, architecture, landscape and traditions. HLF would like the communities of South Lanarkshire to experience the rewards of an HLF project and is keen to hear from groups with other heritage project ideas.

Notes to editors

South Lanarkshire Mining History

§ At its peak in the early 19th century, mining in Scotland employing 140,000 people with coal from areas like South Lanarkshire fuelling Britain's industrial revolution. Today the industry employs less than 2,000 people.

§ South Lanarkshire mining communities were insular from the 17th – 19th century often paid in vouchers to be used in the company-owned shop.

§ Across the country, miners and their families were bound to the colliery in which they worked through a 1606 Act of Parliament. It was not until 1799 that an Act was passed stating that all colliers were 'to be free from their servitude'. However, financial necessity meant that whole families, including young children, were still employed to work long, dangerous shifts.

§ The growth of mining meant that new workers from the Highlands, Ireland, and Lithuania migrated to South Lanarkshire.

§ Keir Hardie's experience of mining and being blacklisted as an 'agitator' encouraged him to become active in the Trade Unions before going on to form the Labour Party.

§ The Blantyre Mining disaster of 1877 was the worst recorded in Scotland with 207 men killed and more than 348 dependents made homeless.

§ Bothwellhaugh, a mining village attached to the Hamilton Palace mine is now under a loch, lost as part of developing Strathclyde Country Park.

§ The last deep coal mine in Scotland closed in 2002.

§ At Leadhills, the national importance of the spoil heaps and their landscape was recognised by scheduling as an Ancient Monument in 1994. The biodiversity supported by this site has been recognised as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

§ *A first-round pass means the project meets our criteria for funding and we 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. 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.

Further information

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