Hogwarts Express

10/12/2009

Across the iconic Glenfinnan viaduct, in an area of outstanding natural beauty sits Glenfinnan Station Museum which today was awarded a grant of £195,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Featured in ‘Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets' and 'Harry Potter and the prisoner of Azkaban' films, it is one of the best-preserved working stations on the West Highland Line. The Heritage Lottery investment will give people the chance to step back in time and experience the atmosphere of a late Victorian station while learning about the history of the ‘iron road to the Isles’ in the Highlands.

Housed in the station buildings, the Heritage Lottery Fund investment will completely revitalise the museum to recreate the ‘glory days’ of steam power in the railways. The main buildings will be restored and repaired in order to display its fascinating artefacts, many of which are currently in storage because of the buildings’ poor conditions. The collection includes major pieces of station furniture, trolleys and original rolling stock including a dining car and sleeper carriage as well as photographs and memorabilia.

The signal box will retain its manually operated signal system but be converted to provide a much-needed educational area which will be open to the public and will enable the museum to develop a full education programme for schools for the first time. It will include an audio-visual studio with regular screenings of heritage railway film footage.

The funding will also help upgrade the upland footpath between the Station and Glenfinnan Viaduct with its 21 arches spanning the valley 100ft above the ground. The existing trail is in heavy use and suffers from erosion. Once the path’s construction is complete, people will be able to safely walk up to the viewing point and viaduct beyond, taking in the magnificent landscape around Loch Shiel.

Glenfinnan Station was built in 1900 by Robert McAlpine, frequently referred to as ‘Concrete Bob’, as part of the West Highland Line extension from Fort William to Mallaig and was a busy freight and passenger line. Today, it continues as a working rail station with eight scheduled services a day plus the regular Jacobite steam train service in the summer. A variety of restored locomotives therefore regularly pass through what is internationally renowned as one of the Great Railway Journeys of the World.

Commenting on today’s announcement, Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund, said: “We are thrilled to be able to help breathe new life into this gem of a museum. Its fascinating artefacts provide a wealth of educational opportunities for people of all ages as they delve into the history of the railway, of industrialisation and how it shaped the lives of our ancestors. The rarity of a station like this, complete with so many original features in such a stunning natural setting is a gift to Scotland’s tourist industry and one we should treasure and enjoy.”

John Barnes, the Museum's Curator, added: "We are excited at the prospect of now being able to bring all our development plans into fruition, and are tremendously grateful for the encouragement and support we have received from HLF. We are deeply indebted to a number of individuals and agencies for getting to this stage, and are looking forward to working with them all as the project progresses."

Notes to editors

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range

of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. To date it has invested over £500million in Scotland's heritage.

Further information

Shiona Mackay, Heritage Lottery on 01786 870 638 / 07779 142 890

Hege Hemes, Glenfinnan Station on 01397 722 334 / 295 or glenfinnanstn@btconnect.com