‘Into the Future’ wins Heritage Lottery Fund support

10/12/2012

The project aims to instigate a three-year education programme to significantly enhance the museum’s offer to schools and the local community. The re-display of most of the galleries will bring collections and archives together, making them accessible to a wider range of people, and will offer visitors increased access and engagement.

The refurbishment of the old mill section of the museum, located in a conservation area, will create an improved environment for both the collections and for visitors. New storage areas will help preserve the museum’s valuable collections for future generations and the building will full disabled access.

Development funding of £49,000 has been awarded to help Saddleworth Museum and Art Gallery progress their plans to apply for a full HLF grant at a later date. The development phase will be used to plan all aspects of the project to include architectural design requirements for the building, research on the collections and design for re-display of the gallery areas so that so much more of Saddleworth’s rich history can be told.

The museum will complete the digitisation of their collections, giving opportunities to broaden public access and offering new ways to engage with the collections.

The area of Saddleworth, in the Pennines, consists of 10 small villages which owe their origins to the textile industry. Located between Manchester and Huddersfield, its location was best described by a local historian as “a little bit of Yorkshire on the Lancashire side of the Pennines”. The museum opened in 1962 and was built, mainly by volunteers, from the remains of a former textile mill. However, it soon outgrew itself and in 1979 an extension was added, complete with art gallery, with most of the work funded by the local community through the fundraising campaign, 'Buy a Brick'. The museum has a limited number of paid staff including a full time curator and is reliant on the input of over 50 volunteers who help with the collections and exhibitions, fundraising and maintenance.

What was once described as a ‘dour’ part of the village is now a green and pleasant location with the museum centrally located in the conservation area alongside the restored Huddersfield Narrow Canal. Local involvement with the museum has always been key and the building is used by many local groups and charities, including the ‘Canalside Quilters’ for lectures, events and workshops.

The museum still continues to receive a lot of support from the local community with a strong ‘Friends of the Museum’ group which has a membership of nearly 300. The museum also receives annual support from the local Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council.

Peter Fox, Curator of Saddleworth Museum, said "We are absolutely delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us this support. Saddleworth Museum and Art Gallery, which is run as a community resource, proudly celebrated its 50th year in 2012. Throughout the years it has played a fundamental role within the local community, being both supported and used by local people as well as being seen by many visitors from further afield. This project will help us to ensure the museum’s future for the next 50 years."

Explaining the importance of the HLF support, Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: “Saddleworth Museum and Art Gallery provides a great insight into the varied heritage of the local area and is much-

loved and well-used by the local community. Its fascinating collections will now be available for more people to learn about. HLF is pleased to be given our initial support to these project plans."

Notes to editors

About Saddleworth Museum & Art Gallery - a Community Resource Saddleworth Museum & Gallery – opened in 1962 and is a charitable trust run by a board of trustees and a management committee on behalf of the people of Saddleworth.

The parish of Saddleworth is rich in landscape, buildings and artefacts from Roman times to the present day, and the aim of the museum was to preserve and record this history and heritage at a time when enormous changes threatened to obliterate much of our past.

Further information

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