Julian Huppert MP visits redeveloped Polar Museum

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Julian Huppert MP visited The Polar Museum: Scott Polar Research Institute today, to see for himself the results of the £1.75million museum redevelopment that was made possible by the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)

The Museum is part of one of the world's leading research centres on the polar regions and cares for an unparalleled collection of Arctic and Antarctic art, archives and artefacts.

The project saw the refurbishment and redesign of the museum galleries that has extended the exhibition space by 20%, which has meant never-before-seen items are now on display. From the last letters of Captain Scott and the polar party to the stunning Antarctic photographs taken by Herbert Ponting (also purchased with a previous HLF grant) the museum is open for everyone to enjoy.

The project has also provided new platforms for education and research, including activities for the general public such as lectures, gallery talks and family events, as well as new opportunities for volunteers to get directly involved in the museum’s many activities.

Inga Grimsey, Chair of Heritage Lottery Fund committee for the East of England, said: "The collections at The Polar Museum are of outstanding national and international heritage importance. Through telling the story of polar exploration, visitors can embrace the cultures, art and scientific study of the polar regions, including work undertaken to investigate the impact of climate change. Thanks to Lottery player’s money and the hard work of all those involved in the museum redevelopment, many more people will be given the opportunity share and learn about this remarkable museum and its extraordinary collections."

Heather Lane, Librarian and Keeper of Collections at the Scott Polar Research Institute, said: “We have been delighted by the public’s response to the new Polar Museum. Our aim has been to make the collections accessible for all to enjoy and the feedback from visitors has been overwhelmingly positive. HLF support for this project was crucial – their recognition of the importance of the collections encouraged many other donors to provide the necessary match funding. The advice given by HLF staff throughout the renovation has also been a real bonus.”

The Polar Museum: Scott Polar Research Institute was founded in 1920 as a memorial to Captain Robert Falcon Scott and his four companions who died on their return from the South Pole. It is the oldest centre for polar research in the world.

Following the extensive refurbishment, the Museum re-opened in 2010, 100 years after the start of Scott’s British Antarctic Expedition. The Museum currently has over 8,000 objects in its care including artefacts, paintings and drawings, over 100,000 photographs and other material charting the history of polar exploration and science.

The Museum's archive also houses a world-class collection of manuscript material - one of the world's largest collections relating to historical and modern scientific expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic. The collections include many treasures of Britain's polar heritage, such as Sir Ernest Shackleton's four expedition diaries and items relating to the loss of Sir John Franklin's North-West Passage expedition with 129 men aboard HMS Erebus and HMS Terror.

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. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

In the East of England we have awarded more than £290million to almost 3,000 projects.

Other HLF grants awarded to The Polar Museum include £200,000 to purchase Inuit Art and sculpture; in 2004 an award of £533,000 was given to acquire the original glass negatives of photographs taken by Herbert Ponting between 1910 and 1912.

Further information

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