Good news for Jurassic Coast Discovery Centre

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The project is the result of the efforts of many local partners and aims to create a major tourist attraction, which will use exciting exhibits and an innovative programme of learning and public engagement to reveal the area's rich marine and coastal heritage.

Development funding of £56,500 has been awarded in this first stage to help the project partners progress their plans to apply for a full grant of approximately £500k in November of this year. EDDC is working closely with Devon Wildlife Trust, Seaton Town Council, Devon County Council and a huge range of local partners and community stakeholders, such as the Seaton Visitor Centre Trust and the Jurassic Coast team.

If successfully secured, the full HLF grant would take the partners close to the final figure they need to provide the ideal facility, providing an added boost to make it more likely that a start can be made on site by spring 2014. The funding would also assist with the costs of interpretative display and exhibits both inside and around the new building. If awarded, it would supplement the £1.8million EDDC is re-investing and a further £500,000 already pledged by Devon County Council. Devon Wildlife Trust has been identified as the operating partner for the centre once it is completed.

The new facility would be a focal point for visitors to the Jurassic Coast and is one of several attractions being developed as part of regeneration plans in Seaton. The building, which was recently given planning approval by EDDC, would be located on the site of the old Tourist Information Centre in Undercliff Drive. Alongside attractions such as the Axe Estuary Wetlands it ties together the 'Natural Seaton' concept which will be used to attract new visitors to the town and its surrounding areas.

Councillor Ian Thomas, EDDC Cabinet Member for the Economy, said: "We're delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us this support. Our plans for regeneration in Seaton hinge on improving the tourist offer of the town and creating some wonderful new attractions for residents and visitors to enjoy. We'll continue to work closely with our partners to take forward the next stage of our bid, helped immeasurably by this extra funding."

Councillor Steph Jones, EDDC Member Champion for Seaton, said: "This is a great step in the right direction and I'm very thankful for all the hard work people from the various agencies have put in to the bid so far. Seaton will benefit greatly from the Discovery Centre and if we can attract HLF funding it will make an even bigger difference to the town".

Harry Barton, Chief Executive of Devon Wildlife Trust, said: "This is fantastic news for the Jurassic Coast Discovery Centre, for Seaton and for Devon Wildlife Trust. It is a giant leap forward, and is testament to the huge support that the community has given to this exciting project".

Councillor Gaynor Sedgwick, Chairman and Town Mayor Seaton Town Council, a funding partner, said: "This is very exciting news and very promising, so much hard work has gone into this project, since its inception ten years ago by Seaton Visitors Centre Trust."

Councillor Roger Croad, Devon County Council Cabinet Member for Environment and Communities, said: "This support from HLF is recognition of the value that this centre would provide for Seaton and the opportunities it would offer visitors to find out more about the East Devon section of the Jurassic Coast. A lot of work has already gone into this scheme but

this funding is welcome to further develop proposals for interpretation both inside and outside the building. This scheme would complement the other recently opened facilities along the Jurassic Coast in Dorset at Durlston and Chesil Beach, as well as the outdoor interpretation that Devon County Council has provided at Orcombe in Exmouth."

Explaining the importance of the HLF support, Nerys Watts, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South West, said: “The Jurassic Coast Discovery Centre will provide a great insight into the varied heritage of the local area and its historic importance. HLF is pleased to support this worthwhile project and looks forward to seeing detailed proposals as we continue to the next stage of the grant.”

Notes to editors

A first-round pass means the project meets HLF criteria for funding and HLF believes the project 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. On occasion, an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their scheme.

Further information

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