

Kelmarsh Hall's plans to bring 'below stairs' back to life

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Kelmarsh Hall is planning to redevelop underground areas of the main house to chronicle the lives of those who worked in the hall and served its former residents. The grant awarded by HLF will be used to put together a full Lottery application for the £1million project.

Dating back to 1800, the basement of the main house contains a butler's pantry, brew house, wine cellar, bakehouse and footman's bedroom. A separate laundry block - which is accessed from the basement via a long underground tunnel - includes a wash-house along with ironing and fuel rooms.

While some of the areas are in extremely poor condition, some well-preserved original cupboards and fittings remain. These, along with other features from different phases of occupation will be retained and conserved, starting with the laundry area. Once the project is complete, it will provide a valuable education resource for both visiting school groups and general visitors. For instance, families will be able to take part in fabric and textile activities in the laundry area, or have a go at bread-making in the bakehouse.

General Manager Lesley Denton said the project was a manifestation of the Kelmarsh Trust's aim to conserve the built environment and promote education about the hall. She said: "We're delighted to have received a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help us put together our Lottery application. It marks an exciting step forward in the biggest project we have undertaken for some years.

"We want people to visit Kelmarsh and learn about their own and other people's history by taking part in educational activities. We have identified the need for more heritage-related family activities which the whole family can enjoy together, and these are things we want to deliver in a heritage environment.

"We already have a growing school visits programme in the kitchen garden and we'd like to extend our education offer to the house, as Kelmarsh Hall has a rich history both upstairs and downstairs. As well as learning about the families who owned and lived in the hall, we want visitors to gain an insight into the lives of those who worked behind-the-scenes so their stories are heard too. Education underpins much of what we do at Kelmarsh and this project will add another dimension to what we offer."

Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands Vanessa Harbar, added: "Whilst this is the first step in securing a full grant, this is a great project that aims to open up parts of the hall that are currently inaccessible to the public. We are pleased to give these initial plans the green light and look forward to receiving the full application."

Kelmarsh's Fundraiser Carla Cooper, said: "Through this project, we want to encourage and inspire new audiences to visit Kelmarsh Hall. It will allow us to unlock another part of the hall's history so we can offer something very unique to the local area."

HLF recently announced new research showing that heritage-based tourism is now worth £26.4bn to the UK economy.

Notes to editors

Kelmarsh Hall is a Grade I listed country house built in the 1730s to a James Gibbs design. The hall and gardens are now in the care of a charitable trust and are open to members of the public throughout the spring and summer months.

Further information

For more information and images please contact Monique Mills on 01604 686543, email: marketing@kelmarsh.com.

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[Kelmarsh Hall website](#)

Kelmarsh charity registration number: 295154