Lottery cash to save historic weavers' cottages

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The cottages are examples of combined workshops and houses associated with worsted production, which pre-dated growth of the carpet industry and are unique survivors of this part of Kidderminster's industrial heritage. In addition to providing a new lease of life for these cottages as unique places to live, there will be volunteering opportunities for people to get involved in protecting, conserving and learning about their associated heritage stories.

Known locally as the Weavers' Cottages, nos 20 – 22 Horsefair are seriously 'at risk', having been derelict for many years. Grade II listed because of their importance to the history of Kidderminster, background research carried out during the planning of this rescue scheme has identified that the earliest cottage is believed to have been constructed c1709. The cottages therefore span over 300 years of Kidderminster’s history, with many stories to tell about changes from a rural to an industrial town.

The project will see these buildings refurbished to current domestic standards, with minimum intervention and maximum retention of historic fabric. Where this is not possible, new materials will match the existing, with these buildings then having a secure future as sustainable dwellings. Most importantly, they will survive as a physical link to the town’s heritage, to help inform present and future generations.

The trust is working closely with other local heritage groups, for example the Kidderminster Civic Society and Kidderminster Museum of Carpet, and with schools and colleges developing an exciting programme of activities to bring alive the social history of Kidderminster, its evolution as an industrial town and the important contribution that our historic built environment can make to local communities.

A wide-range of heritage-based activities will take place during the consolidation works to the cottages, including open days to see work in progress, projects involving local schools, and opportunities to learn about building conservation skills. There will be opportunities for volunteers to get involved and students within heritage education will be encouraged to develop interpretation and educational resources for the wider audience.

Bob Tolley, Chairman of Worcestershire Building Preservation Trust, said: “We’re delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us this grant and I am particularly pleased, having lived for most of my life in the Kidderminster area. The oldest of the cottages has been a part of the Kidderminster landscape for the past 300 years, and it’s great to know that we are a step closer to preserving these important buildings for people to be able to appreciate now and in the decades to come.”

Reyahn King, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands, said: “These Grade II listed weavers cottages in Kidderminster are of exceptional heritage importance. It is Lottery investment like this that gives a new lease of life to buildings that form the historic fabric of our towns and cities, and we are delighted to be able to help the trust save them for future generations.”

Yvonne Leishman, Managing Director of the current owners Wyre Forest Community Housing, added: “We are pleased that the trust has been able to secure the HLF grant, and will continue to support the trust in bringing about the refurbishment as soon as possible.”

The Worcestershire Building Preservation Trust is aiming to be ready to invite tenders for the building work early next year, with work on site starting Summer 2014. The cottages are expected to be ready for new owners to move in by the end of next year.

Notes to editors

A confirmed award means that money had already been earmarked by HLF for the project in question and that the full amount has now been secured.

The Worcestershire Building Preservation Trust, a registered charity, aims to rescue buildings 'at risk' that are of historic or architectural importance. The trust has completed successful projects at Church House, Areley Kings; Wyre Hill, Bewdley; Belle House, Pershore; Load St, Bewdley; and the Sargeants House, Ledbury; where sustainable uses have been found for otherwise abandoned historic properties. Further information can be obtained on the Weavers' cottages website.

Further information

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