Heritage Lottery Fund boost for King Edward Mine Museum redevelopment project

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Cornwall Council has been awarded the development funding to help it progress plans to apply for a further £800,000 from the HLF in the future. The redevelopment project, costing £1.4m in total, will aim to create a new exhibition space in the former Boiler House and adapt the derelict Assay Office to build a café on the Great Flat Lode that passes through the site. Both buildings are on English Heritage's Heritage at Risk Register. Under the council's plans, the project will also see the refurbishment of the mill and other core museum buildings to safeguard the mine complex and the historic collections contained on the site.

Alongside the conservation works, the project includes funding to encourage more people, especially families, to visit the mine and surrounding area of the Great Flat Lode and to learn more about the local heritage and historic landscape. Two new posts will also be created to support this work and there will be a range of opportunities for volunteering.

"We are very grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for their vote of confidence in the plans that we have presented for the enhancement of King Edward Mine Museum," said Councillor Julian German, Cornwall Council Cabinet Member for Economy and Culture. "In 2009 the council purchased King Edward Mine to safeguard it, recognising the potential threat to this internationally important heritage site when Camborne School of Mines gave up their lease. Over the last few years we have worked with KEM Ltd, the site operators who have tirelessly striven to protect the heritage site, to develop a master plan for the site. With the funding we have secured from Europe, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Challenge Fund we are now confident that King Edward Mine will have a viable future."

Nerys Watts, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South West, said: "King Edward Mine is the oldest complete early 20th-century mine site left in Cornwall and an important reminder of the area's long and proud mining heritage. Today's initial HLF support marks a great first step and will enable Cornwall Council to work up plans for this exciting and engaging project. We look forward to working with them over the coming months."

King Edward Mine, the former home of Camborne School of Mines, was bought by Cornwall Council in 2009. The museum is leased to KEM Ltd, a local charity whose volunteers have expertly restored and brought back into working order much of the tin processing machinery and have created an award-winning museum with very limited resources.

The site is recognised as having Outstanding Universal Value as the best preserved mine within the Cornish Mining World Heritage Site (WHS) for the pre-1920 period. The entire complex is within the WHS and includes 16 buildings listed Grade II* and South Condurrow Stamps Engine House which is listed Grade II. The council had also secured a grant of over £1m from the ERDF Convergence Programme to turn two redundant buildings on the site into workspaces for the creative industries.

"The KEM Preservation Group was set up 25 years ago with the approval of Camborne School of Mines who were then still occupying some of the buildings," said Tony Brooks, Chairman of KEM Ltd. "After they moved to Penryn, CSM found that they were unable to sustain a field station at KEM. We then took over the whole site and the surrounding 20 acres of mine land. The volunteer team have done a fantastic job in developing the museum.

"We are delighted that this work has been recognised by the award of this grant. It will ensure the future of a number of important buildings, put the heritage site on a firmer footing and will also give us the opportunity to broaden the appeal of the museum to a wider, younger audience. Mining in Cornwall, or at least West Cornwall, has shaped the county both physically and socially. With mining now sadly becoming a memory, it will be places like King Edward Mine where people will be able to connect with Cornwall's industrial past."

The Challenge Fund, administered by the Architectural Heritage Fund, provided the first piece of the funding jigsaw puzzle for this project.

Ian Lush, Chief Executive of the Architectural Heritage Fund said: "The Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) is delighted to see that King Edward Mine has been successful in its bid for support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, following the AHF's own investment of £200,000 through the Challenge Fund for Historic Buildings at Risk, funded by Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation and English Heritage. We wish the project every success as it moves forward."

Councillor Robert Webber, Cornwall Council Local Member for Camborne Treslothan said: "I very much welcome the announcement of this award from the Heritage Lottery Fund to enhance the visitor experience at King Edward Mine, conserving these internationally significant buildings and creating a destination café that will bring more leisure visitors to the area and provide a great facility for the local community to use. King Edward Mine is a remarkable survival and this project will encourage more people, especially families, to come and enjoy this award-winning museum."

Note to editors

A first-round pass/initial support 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.

About King Edward Mine

King Edward Mine is located to the south of Camborne, between the villages of Beacon and Troon, towards the western end of the Great Flat Lode valley. Following the establishment of Camborne Mining School in the late 1880s, the eastern section of South Condurrow Mine (1864-1896) was leased from the Pendarves Estate and renamed King Edward Mine (KEM) in 1901. Three years later after the mine was equipped with new surface machinery, buildings and a new mill, it was successfully operating as a training facility (above and below ground) for students of Camborne School of Mines, the main practical mine training school in the country.

The complex of structures making up the core area of the King Edward Mine site are unique in that they were almost all constructed during a single development phase (1897 – 1907), each for a specific function. It is extremely rare that most of the original buildings have survived without significant modification. For this reason, many have been accorded designation as Grade II* Listed Buildings (the associated South Condurrow stamps engine house is Listed at Grade II, and the nearby Fortescue's Shaft pumping and winding engine houses on Grenville United Mine are Scheduled Monuments). The site is also a key element of the Cornish Mining World Heritage Site in recognition of the very important role it played in the development of the Cornish mining industry.

In 1974, Camborne School of Mines relocated to Pool, however King Edward Mine continued to be partly used for mining tuition until 2005. During this period, part of the site which included the important mill complex containing rare surviving collections of original mine machinery and rare milling equipment, became redundant. A volunteer group was set up in 1987 to try to preserve these now redundant structures, to restore the mill and in time to open it as a museum, which they achieved in 2001.

In 2005 the team of volunteers became incorporated as King Edward Mine Ltd., a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee and later, were also registered as a charity. In 2009, to safeguard the site's future, Cornwall Council purchased King Edward Mine from the Pendarves Estate and begun a process of master planning, involving the local community and stakeholders. This project is the first of two significant capital schemes that will secure the long-term future of King Edward Mine, now the oldest complete mine site left in Cornwall.

Further information

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