Leeds' Kirkgate wins £1 million regeneration boost

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Kirkgate is the oldest street in Leeds and links Leeds Parish Church to the city centre. There is evidence of an Anglo-Saxon settlement in the area and the buildings that can be seen today proudly showcase the city's 19th-century development, making the site one of major historic value. Extensive repairs will be carried out to various heritage buildings with the reinstatement of lost architectural features and refurbishment of vacant buildings. The scheme will bring wider training and work placement opportunities, stimulating interest in the local heritage and involving school children in activities and workshops.

The project is one of eleven town centres across the UK that are to receive a much-needed boost totalling £14m. The earmarked* money will help fund vital community regeneration schemes in these currently neglected areas.

The investment is part of the HLF's THI scheme which has committed over £200m since 1998 towards the regeneration of towns that have suffered serious social and economic decline.

Fiona Spiers, Head of HLF Yorkshire and the Humber, said: "The Heritage Lottery Fund is proud to be playing a key role in helping to revitalise once thriving towns and cities. The benefits are far reaching. This investment will help support Leeds City Council and residents to transform Kirkgate, making essential improvements and repairs that will encourage local businesses and visitors back into this historically vibrant area."

Cllr Andrew Carter, Leader of Leeds City Council, said: "This is an exciting restoration project for the city. As the oldest street in Leeds I look forward to seeing Lower Kirkgate restored to its former glory and integrated with the rest of the city centre. In partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund and the private sector this development will help to rejuvenate a long neglected area of Leeds city centre which will benefit shoppers, traders and the city of Leeds alike. We are rightly proud of Leeds' heritage credentials and have confidence in the city's future."

Peter Baker, Chairman of the Leeds Civic Trust, said: "Leeds Civic Trust is absolutely delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has agreed to allocate funding for the regeneration of this historic street. The Trust has been campaigning for many years for improvements to be carried out to Lower Kirkgate, with its wealth of historic associations and its collection of some of the oldest buildings in Leeds City Centre. We congratulate the City Council for the work it has done in securing this award and look forward to working with them and others over the next few years to help ensure the success of the project."

The project is the culmination of years of discussions between Leeds City Council, English Heritage, the Leeds Civic Trust, and the majority landowner in the area City Fusion. The THI is part of a wider initiative to regenerate the area.

Notes to editors

* The Lower Kirkgate project has received a first-round pass of £1,051,800 and includes a development grant of £43,800. A Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) earmarked first-round pass means that money has been set aside by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the scheme in question. Competition at this stage is tough, and while it does not guarantee funding, it is an indication of positive support. The applicants can then progress to the second round and submit a further, fully-developed application to secure the full award. On occasion, development funding will also be

awarded at the first round. This early level of strong financial commitment means that THIs can build strong partnerships with the assurance that funding for their scheme is in place provided their final proposals fully meet the programme criteria.

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.

To date, HLF has made 279 awards in Leeds totalling just under £54.5million. There are two other THI schemes recently awarded in Leeds: Armley THI and Chapeltown THI, both of which are successfully in progress and contributing to the regeneration of the city.

Further information

Vicky Wilford, HLF Press Office on 020 7591 6046 / 07973 401937 or vickyw@hlf.org.uk

Franklin Riley, Leeds City Council on 0113 247 8138 or franklin.riley@leeds.gov.uk.