Major heritage project rallies local people in Charnwood

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Leicestershire Victoria County History Trust has been awarded a grant of £363,700 by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to carry out the four-year Charnwood Roots project and will be inviting local people from communities across the area to get involved.

The project will explore the history of thirty five towns and villages in and around Charnwood Forest and Loughborough. Volunteers will have a unique opportunity to contribute to a nationally important research project and investigate their local history with the help of professional historians and archaeologists.

Free training will be given and those without any previous experience will be welcomed and encouraged to take part. There will be opportunities for 400 people to discover the thousands of years of history on their doorstep and develop new skills in using maps and documentary records, archaeology, oral history, and surveying and recording historic buildings and landscapes. Public events and activities aimed at families, groups, businesses and local schools will share the new discoveries with the wider community.

The results will be available on the internet, through podcasts, exhibitions, talks, educational resources for schools, walking trails and a concluding Charnwood Roots Heritage Festival. The intention is then to incorporate the new research within the Victoria History of the Counties of England, an important reference history. This will be the first project of its kind in Leicestershire.

Chairman of Leicestershire VCH Trust, Mr Gerard de Lisle, is naturally delighted that Charnwood Roots has won Heritage Lottery Fund support: “This grant recognises the significance of Charnwood and the important place that it occupies in our national history. There is great enthusiasm for local history in Leicestershire and this project will give us the opportunity to bring together many communities in and around the Forest to explore the heritage of this unique and fascinating area. We are very grateful to the many individuals and groups who have played a part in this success.”

Work is likely to begin in the summer. Anyone who would like find out more or take part in this exciting project is invited to contact the trust at charnwoodroots@leicester.ac.uk or ring Julie Attard on 0116 252 5946.

Notes to editors

The Leicestershire Victoria County History project is part of a national endeavour, which began in 1899 to write the history of every place in England so that the public would have access to a reliable account of the history of their town or village, wherever they lived. These local histories, which are internationally renowned and are among the most heavily used reference works in local record offices, are published in ‘big red books’ and are available online.

Work on the Leicestershire volumes ceased in the 1960s with some 300 parishes still to be investigated and written. Leicestershire Victoria County History Trust was formed in 2008 and registered as a charity in 2009 to raise the necessary funds for this work to be undertaken. The Trust provides training and support to an enthusiastic team of volunteers who are researching the histories of towns and villages around the county. The trust is committed to providing training to these volunteers free of charge and to sharing Leicestershire’s local history with the community

through educational projects and events. It relies on charitable donations to support this important work. More information can be found at the Leicestershire Victoria County History Trust website.