# Menter Iaith Sir Ddinbych wins HLF support

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The project, developed in close partnership with the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB and with further support from the local Rural Development agency, Cadwyn Clwyd, will deliver an 18 month programme of activities focusing on the heritage of farming and rural life in Denbighshire.

In this predominantly rural county farming has always been at the heart of the local economy and community, but has changed beyond recognition in the lifetimes of the older farmers. They are now the last people who can give accounts of milking and shearing by hand, harvesting using threshing machines, building a haystack, ploughing with horses and the purchase of their first tractors. The project will illustrate the link between people, communities, language and the landscape. Working the land has not only shaped our countryside, but shaped the communities engaged in it. The two have been and continue to be inextricably linked. Game keeping and shooting was of course also an important part of the traditional management of the heather moorland of Llantysilio, the Berwyns, the Denbigh Moors and the Clwydian Range and the project will give an opportunity to document this in addition to farming.

There is a strong intergenerational element to this project which will provide young people with training in gathering memories and digital archiving to enable them to engage with the local farming community and older farmers in particular to document in detail of this very different way of life, using personal memories and old photographs to build up a valuable archive from the 1940s up to the present day.

A portable exhibition will be developed including a flexible 'mini-museum' kit that will include a flip-book of old photos along with showing digital photos and playing sound recordings, and fresh photographs and interviews will be constantly added to the digital element of the exhibition throughout the project. These will be collected at a series of memory gathering events which will be held at venues including Ruthin Farmer's Auction, Llangollen Museum, Oriel Corwen, the AONB stand at the Flint and Denbigh Show and of course the National Eisteddfod, which will be held in Denbighshire in 2013.

The Welsh language is obviously an integral element of the project. The older members of rural communities who are now the last people who can give accounts of agricultural methods and way of life in these communities in bygone days are also the last custodians of a rich oral tradition of often unique local dialect words for these agricultural methods and the associated cultural activities. Significant changes to both the rural way of life and the linguistic makeup of these communities makes it vital to capture and document these things now whilst it is still possible as it is increasingly unlikely that these will be transmitted naturally within the community as they were in the past. These records, particularly the oral element will constitute a unique and valuable resource both for use both locally and nationally through the involvement of the Welsh National History Museum.

Nerys Davies, Chair of Menter Iaith Sir Ddinbych, said: “As a Menter we are very glad to hear that we have received such a substantial grant which will enable us to develop a very exciting project – The Memories Museum. Like all of Wales’ Mentrau Iaith, we are dependent on grants; without this financial sponsorship, we would not be able to collect and conserve evidence of the county’s rich agricultural heritage. This exhibition will not only be available to the people of Denbighshire, but during the 2013 National Eisteddfod the exhibition will enable the whole of Wales to appreciate the

contribution that the people of Denbighshire have made to the agricultural way of life. We look forward to seeing this project develop during the coming months."

And David Shiel, Senior Countryside Officer Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, added: "We are very pleased to be working with Menter Iaith Sir Ddinbych on this exciting project. There is such a wealth of knowledge and understanding of rural life and traditions within the agricultural community of the AONB and some fascinating stories to tell. The farming community has propped up the fabric of our rural way of life for generations, provided the diversity of habitats that makes our countryside such a haven for wildlife and so outstandingly beautiful."

Explaining the importance of the HLF grant award, Jennifer Stewart, Head of the HLF in Wales, said: “This project is a perfect example of how heritage is all around us. It’s not just about precious buildings and artefacts, it’s also about our environment, way of life and people. The memories and information held by people in this rural community must be recorded so that we can all understand and learn about how the community evolved and I am really pleased that HLF is able to support this project. I look forward to hearing about some of the stories that are discovered in the coming months.”

**Notes to editors**

Menter Iaith Sir Ddinbych is one of 23 Mentrau Iaith (Language Initiatives) throughout Wales. Mentrau Iaith are local groups or organisations which offer help and support to increase and develop the use of the Welsh Language in all aspects of life. A Menter Iaith usually works in one county, and reflects the local community’s desire to make more use of the language. The Mentrau provide advice and assistance to individuals, organisations and businesses and hold various activities to raise the profile of the language.

The Clwydian Range & Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is an area of 388 sq km recognised for its outstanding landscape quality. It is one of only 5 AONBs in Wales and stretches from Prestatyn Hillside in the North to Llangollen and Corwen in the South. It includes the Offa’s Dyke Path National Trail and the Pontcysyllte Aquaduct and Canal World Heritage Site, Chirk Castle and Moel Famau and the Jubilee Tower.

**Further information**

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