

Museum of Free Derry expansion

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded a £500,000 grant to support the expansion of the Museum of Free Derry. The funding will be used to expand the current building to house a dedicated community space, an archive and research area and extend the existing exhibition area and public facilities.

The plans will increase access to the museum's collection and archive, which currently numbers some 30,000 items, and will enhance the learning opportunities and overall visitor experience currently available. A ground floor extension will provide additional exhibition facilities, while the new first floor space will provide a dedicated classroom area that is fully equipped to meet the needs of visiting groups, an archive and research area to enable greater care of and increased access to the archive, a reflective area to allow visitors a space in which to reflect on their visit and a multi-use conference and events space.

Commenting on the announcement, Stella McDermott, from HLF, said: "We are delighted to support this project which will provide the extra space and enhanced facilities that are necessary to enable the museum to offer a first class experience to visitors. It will provide public access to much of the museum's expansive collection for the first time, enabling new study of the material and artefacts and increasing opportunities for a wide range of users to learn more about this heritage."

A dedicated activity plan has also been developed to increase opportunities for the local community to become involved in a range of activities at the museum. Open days will be held to encourage people to participate in a volunteering programme and everyday work of the museum. Volunteers will be recruited to help collect oral histories, learn new skills in archiving and collections care, train as museum tour guides and to act as ambassadors in helping to develop partnerships with other local organisations.

Adrian Kerr, Manager of the museum, welcomed news of the award: "We are absolutely delighted with this award from the Heritage Lottery Fund, who have supported this project right from the initial design stages. It is a vital step towards the completion of the Museum of Free Derry and the realisation of the full potential of the museum as a major centre of learning on what was such a pivotal period in our history. We are now waiting on funding decisions from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and the City of Culture Capital Fund, and if they are successful as well we can have the new museum up and running in time for the 41st anniversary commemoration of Bloody Sunday in 2013."

Notes to editors

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.

Since 1994 the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded £143million to projects across Northern Ireland.