New gallery depicting changes in rural life opens at Melton Museum!

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After a successful couple of months since opening its doors to the public, Melton Carnegie Museum's new £1million gallery was officially opened last week on Friday 4 February, by author and broadcaster, Paul Heiney, from the television series Countrywise.

Leicestershire County Council's museum in Melton has been completely transformed and extended, and is now double its original size!

As well as a new gallery, it now also has a community space for museum activities and for use by schools and the local community - thanks to nearly £1million support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The fantastic new gallery features innovative technology including interactive displays enabling visitors to enjoy a hands-on experience. The gallery takes on the theme of 'Changing Life in Rural Britain' giving visitors a fascinating insight into how the countryside in Melton Mowbray has responded to the changing world. Displays reflect home and family life as well as working life in the borough. The new gallery facilities include up to date items that cover topical subjects such as transport and green issues as well as the diversification of the rural economy.

The museum now has a study area providing an opportunity for visitors to use internet ready computers to research their local history first hand with expert help from museum staff. The study area also provides access to the important fox hunting library, photographic collections and information about the Melton area, including village history files and archives created by local people and volunteers.

Funding for the project came from HLF through an award of £969,000 with the remainder coming from Leicestershire County Council, Melton Borough Council and the Friends of Leicester and Leicestershire Museums.

Peter Osborne, the Chairman of Leicestershire County Council, said: "The transformation of the museum is truly remarkable. Thanks to the generosity of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the people of Melton and the surrounding area have a fantastic community facility that offers opportunities for everyone to become involved with local history. The new gallery depicts the fascinating history of the borough in a way that can be enjoyed by everyone and the new study area enables visitors to research their own history and links with the area."

Joan Bray, member of the HLF committee for the East Midlands, said: "The Heritage Lottery Fund is pleased to have been able to support the continued development of Melton Carnegie Museum and we are looking forward to working with Leicestershire County Council into the future. This is engaging project, giving visitors and local people from across the community the chance to explore and learn about changing rural life across the country."

Paul Heiney, television broadcaster and writer, said: "Having a personal and professional interest in rural matters, I was delighted to be joining the celebrations at Melton Carnegie Museum, as they officially opened the 'Changing Life In Rural Britain' gallery."

Entry to the museum is free.

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. HLF has supported over 30,000 projects, allocating £4.5 billion across the UK.

Further information

Jenny Dancey, Melton Museum on 0116 305 3860.