Newham groups uncover their local histories

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Stratford Explorers will concentrate on changes affecting the lives of people living and working in the Stratford area since the Second World War. Asian Roots in Uganda will uncover the stories of those forced to flee the East African country in the 1970s because of threats issued by its former dictator Idi Amin.

Both projects will involve young people interviewing their elders to discover first hand the stories about their life and times in the borough. Support for both will also come from local history group Eastside Community Heritage.

"This is putting local history into the hands of the people who have lived through it and also gives young people a range of skills in researching the facts, interviewing and putting their discoveries before a wide audience in a variety of ways," says Sue Bowers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London.

Stratford Explorers, which has been given a grant of £37,100, will be run by A New Direction, a London organisation connecting the arts, culture, heritage and education, working with young Londoners to provide ways for them to access the best of arts and culture. They will be looking at the massive changes experienced in Stratford, from the rebuilding following the Second World War Blitz, to the construction work to create the Olympic site.

The architectural and industrial history and its effect on the local community will feature strongly in the project that sets out to bring together older and younger members of the community to learn about their heritage. Children from Colegrave and Maryland primary schools will be involved along with members of the Holden Point sheltered housing development. The result of their efforts will include information on A New Direction’s website, an exhibition that will be seen in a number of local venues, and an illustrated guided walk leaflet ready for visitors to the area for next year’s Olympics.

Steve Moffitt, Chief Executive Officer of A New Direction, said: ”By developing a real understanding and connection to Newham’s history through the eyes of those who experienced it first hand, these young people will feel a powerful ownership of their local area, as it prepares to host the biggest spectacle on earth – London 2012. A New Direction is pleased to be leading this piece of work, and we look forward to showcasing the resulting work.”

Asian Roots in Uganda has been granted £23,400 through HLF’s Young Roots programme. It is being run by Newham-based Youth For Tomorrow. Young people will explore the reasons why African and Ugandan Asians were forced to flee Uganda in the early 1970s and why they came to settle locally, as well as in the neighbouring borough of Barking and Dagenham. The project, which is being led by the young people themselves, will look at how the migrants related to British culture and how they integrated with the local area.

In the course of their research they will visit the Museum of London, Newham Archives and Valence House Museum in Barking. The young people will create a short documentary film and their work will be preserved in the archives of the borough of Barking and Dagenham.

Jamil Sekyanzi, Project Coordinator, said: “The project will discover and explore reasons why African and Uganda Asians were expelled from Uganda in the 1970s. Young people from Youth For Tomorrow are excited to have a series of trainings through the project as well as learning transferable skills. Thanks to HLF.”

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 30,000 projects, allocating £4.7billion across the UK, including just over £893million in London alone.

Further information

Please contact Vicky Wilford, HLF press office, on; 020 7591 6046 / 07973 401 937, email vickyw@hlf.org.uk or Phil Cooper, HLF press office on: 07889 949 173.

Stratford Explorers – Steve Moffitt, Chief Executive Officer, A New Direction on: 020 8356 5380

Asian Roots in Uganda - Jamil Sekyanzi , Project Coordinator, Youth For Tomorrow on: 07904 880 941