New Holocaust project wins initial lottery backing

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The announcement comes just as the world prepares to mark Holocaust Memorial Day (27 January)*. HSFA is a Leeds-based charity set up in 1996 to protect the legacy of survivors who settled in Yorkshire and help pass their stories and life lessons on to future generations. The group has been awarded a £13,400 development grant to work up plans for a project which aims to make more accessible newly available evidence of their members from German Nazi archives, and train a new generation of volunteer speakers to pass on these stories as first generation survivors increasingly become too elderly for the task.

The first-round pass** means that HSFA can now progress to the second stage of the HLF application process and they have up to two years to submit more detailed plans and apply for a full grant of just over £190,000 from HLF for the project.

Demand for the work and services of HSFA is increasing: it is estimated that the Yorkshire based survivors engaged with at least 5,000 people during 2007/2008, 7,000 in 2008/2009 10,000 in 2009-2010 and 14,000 during 2010– both in Yorkshire, nationally and internationally via the internet. HSFA is the only Northern organisation meeting this demand in the UK, and whilst the number of Holocaust survivors is diminishing – more and more people are now opening up for the first time about their experiences, coming forward, and wanting to share their stories.

This, coupled with the discovery and release of an extensive collection of surviving Nazi archives now available to survivors and their families through the International Tracing Service (ITS) based in Bad Arolsen, Germany, paves the way for this project to keep the vital legacy of the Holocaust alive for future generations. From documents such as prisoner identity cards, transport lists, sickness certificates, and photographs, this presents a new opportunity to add to knowledge and understanding, particularly of how the Holocaust became normalised through bureaucracy during the early 20th century.

Fiona Spiers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for Yorkshire and Humber, said: "We're extremely pleased to give initial support to the HSFA in the hope of giving them an opportunity to continue with this vital work and we look forward to receiving their application for a full grant in the future."

The HSFA has 120 members, including 85 first generation survivors, their families (second and third generation survivors) and other interested individuals. HSFA Members give talks to school pupils, university students, prisoners, community groups, faith organisations and the police and contribute to numerous events and exhibitions.

Run entirely by volunteers and reliant on donations, fundraising and audience contributions, Lilian Black, Chair of the HSFA explained further how vital this work is to the Holocaust survivor community and others and what the HLF grant will enable them to achieve: “This is our last opportunity to collect the living legacy of Holocaust survivors and secure their stories and records for the future and make them more accessible. We have increasing demand from the community to communicate the lessons of the past and need to train a new generation of speakers from second and third generation families and others who want to use the legacy to alert today and tomorrow’s generation about bigotry and the stages of persecution which lead ultimately to genocide. We will be working over the coming months to develop the proposal further and are absolutely delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has recognised the importance of this challenging but essential work.”

Notes to editors

*** Holocaust Memorial Day – 27 January**
Each year on 27 January the world marks Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD). HMD has been held in the UK since 2001 and the United Nations declared this an International event in November 2005. 27 January was chosen as the date for HMD because it was on this date in 1945 that the largest Nazi killing camp Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated. www.hmd.org.uk

HSFA is a Leeds-based charity set up in 1996. Our aim is to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and use its lessons to work towards a more tolerant society in which difference and diversity are celebrated. To find out more about HSFA.

****A first-round pass** means the project meets our criteria for funding and we believe it has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.

On occasion an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their scheme.

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 £4.5billion across the UK, including £351million in Yorkshire and the Humber alone. To date, HLF has made 310 awards in Leeds amounting to just over £58million.

Further information

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