From revitalising a town centre to safeguarding red squirrels - North Wales receives £1.2m HLF boost

30/06/2011

The funding will help regenerate Cefn Mawr town centre, reintroduce the habitat of the red squirrel on the island of Anglesey and see plans develop for Ll?n Maritime Museum in Nefyn.

Dan Clayton Jones, Chair of Heritage Lottery Fund Committee for Wales, said: “These three projects demonstrate the breadth of our heritage in North Wales, from our historic buildings and distinctive towns to our wildlife and rich maritime history."

“Our funding will help safeguard what makes this part of the world unique whilst creating jobs and giving people opportunities to get involved and develop new skills from traditional building techniques to website management."

“We’ve supported these projects in recognition of the difference they will make to creating vibrant communities, encouraging more visitors to the area and helping attract further investment.”

Cefn Mawr THI, Wrexham
Wrexham County Borough Council has been awarded a £862,200 grant for phase two of its Townscape Heritage Initiative* (THI), to revitalise the commercial town centre of Cefn Mawr and create a vibrant village for tourism and niche shopping.

The town of Cefn Mawr was heavily industrialised throughout the 18th and 19th centuries thanks to vast deposits of iron, sandstone and coal. The nearby Llangollen Canal with Pontcysyllte Aqueduct was designated a World Heritage Site in 2009 and is recognised as a masterpiece of engineering.

The scheme will build on the success of the first THI phase in which HLF invested £1m in September 2005. This first phase saw 18 building projects completed, the creation of 13 new residential units, 12 traditional shop fronts refurbished, six new business start ups, 1,846 sq m of vacant floor space brought back into use, with 27 full time jobs created and 25 safeguarded. In addition 500 people attended a skills training scheme.

The new grant is crucial to complete the repair and conservation of remaining priority buildings within the key areas, Crane Street, Well Street and Hill Street to reinforce links between the town and the World Heritage Site. It will also help encourage further business start-ups, maintain the new level of community pride and attract a wider tourism audience.

It is estimated that another 18 buildings will be restored, creating 24 full-time jobs and safeguarding the same number. Additional skills training in partnership with the Dee Valleys Community Partnership will be offered to 180 local people and contractors focusing on lime mortar pointing, historic windows and the repair of stonework, brick and terracotta to ensure the buildings can be maintained in the future.

The funding will also be used to provide the community with opportunities to get involved in their local heritage through show and tell events, walks, talks and open days, with the aim of creating a permanent heritage display in Cefn.

Derek Evans, 53, runs two businesses in Cefn Mawr. As part of Phase One, his shop Derek's Cycles, was given a new shop front as well as improvements made to the residential properties above. He said: "The scheme has made a big difference to the overall look of the village and in helping to encourage people back to the area. It's great to see new businesses opening up and visitors on the high street again."

"During this difficult financial period, trade has been up and down, but thanks to the work on the flats above the shop, offering local people a nice place to live, I've now got regular tenants which is helping to secure the future of my business during the downturn."

"Personally I couldn't be more positive about the scheme and I'd encourage anyone looking to start up a business or improve their existing shop to get involved in Phase Two. I will definitely be looking at the possibility of bringing my other shop Derek Motor Factors in line with the cycle shop in recognition of the difference it can make. With family in the area I'm keen to see the village flourish and this is the boost it needs to happen."

The total investment secured through funders and the private sector for both schemes is estimated at £4.4m.

Councillor Warren Coleman, chair of the Cefn Mawr Regeneration and Towncsape Heritage Initiative Partnership, said: "The first injection of lottery funding made a tremendous difference to the village, helping to breathe new life into key buildings and creating opportunities for residents, community groups and businesses.

"The fact we've secured further funding is fantastic news, and I'm confident we can continue to build on our success thanks to Heritage Lottery Fund.

"Everything is really coming together in Cefn Mawr. As well as this project, we have a major new super market being built and business opportunities starting to be created by the recently designated Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site."

Councillor Rodney Skelland, Wrexham Council's lead member for regeneration and corporate governance, also welcomed the news. He added: "The project in Cefn Mawr represents an investment in both the past and future of the village.

"This latest funding boost will help ensure the community continues to benefit from the new opportunities created by renovating key shops, homes and public buildings that need investment.

"This is also a great opportunity for Cefn Mawr to reach its potential in catering for visitors to the nearby World Heritage Site."

The Anglesey Red Squirrel Project – An Island Haven

HLF awarded £300,000 to the Friends of the Anglesey Red Squirrels Trust to safeguard the habitat of the red squirrel on the island of Anglesey and get local people actively involved in red squirrel conservation.

The red squirrel is one of the most endangered mammals in the UK and in danger of becoming extinct if no action is taken. The project will build upon an earlier highly successful 13 year conservation initiative on the island and will establish Anglesey as a unique island refuge for red squirrels with the largest population in Wales.

The work carried out will restore a population of red squirrels to gardens, parks and woodlands across the island. The funding will also support practical training sessions for local people to learn about the iconic UK mammal to ensure future generations can appreciate and interact with them.

The news has been welcomed by Iolo Willams, Broadcaster and Wildlife Expert and Patron on the Trust. He said: “The excellent work being undertaken on Anglesey represents the red squirrel's best chance of survival in Wales. It is the only increasing population in the country and with dedicated funding, I am confident that the squirrels can expand to every corner of the island.”

General workshops will be held on monitoring red squirrel activity to encourage local people to report squirrel sightings across Anglesey and to get involved through the use of feeding stations and hair surveys to collect genetic information.

Volunteers will play a vital role in making the project a success and the Friends hope to attract an additional 30 active volunteers who undergo full training. Opportunities range from checking and making nest boxes to making videos and updating social media to giving talks and guided tours.

Interpretation boards and leaflets, a website, video diary and social media pages will help local schools keep up to date with the project as well as provide visitors and interest groups off the island with relevant information.

There is a real opportunity for this project to become an exemplar project in terms of setting standards for the management of squirrel populations around the UK as a whole.

Dr Peter Lurz, international expert on red squirrels, said: “Anglesey is exceptional in the UK in that it is one of the very few places where red squirrels have recovered and expanded their range as a result of the Friends of the Anglesey Red Squirrels project and immense local support. The past work at Anglesey has provided both invaluable lessons and hope for red squirrel conservation in the whole of the UK. The proposed work represents a huge opportunity to build on hard earned scientific knowledge and experience to demonstrate how red squirrel conservation can be successful.”

Dr Craig Shuttleworth, local red squirrel expert and leader of the Anglesey Red Squirrel Project, said: “Our community group is absolutely delighted to have received a HLF grant. We’ve spent two years listening to local people and discussing how the community can get involved in squirrel conservation. The result is a fantastic and innovative range of practical activities and events that will allow local people not only to create an island refuge for red squirrels, but to collect a range of scientific information to help us better understand how to safeguard red squirrels nationally.”

Amgueddfa Forwol Ll?n (Ll?n Maritime Museum)
HLF has also awarded a first-round pass** of £319,000 to the trustees of Amguedddfa Forwol Ll?n (Ll?n Maritime Museum) to improve the learning experience of locals and visitors about the unique maritime history of the Ll?n peninsular.

The first-round pass means that Amgueddfa Forwol Ll?n can now progress to the second stage of the HLF application process and they have up to two years to submit more detailed plans to see the £319,000 of support rolled out. Development funding of £39,700 was awarded by HLF to help them work up these plans.

Fishing has always played an important role in the Ll?n Peninsula and during the 18th and 19th centuries, Nefyn and Porthdinllaen became famous for herring, so much so that three herrings appear on Nefyn’s coat of arms.

The project aims to conserve and adapt the museum’s grade II listed home, the 19th century Eglwys Santes Fair (St Mary’s Church) in Nefyn to create a more suitable space to store and exhibit the collection of regionally significant artefacts. The collection includes film archives, furniture from shipwrecks, items belonging to captains and seamen as well as detailed models of ships.

The trustees plan to expand the current volunteer network and provide training in skills such as oral history and computer technology. The funding would also support the employment of a project co-ordinator to attract a wide range of people to get involved and celebrate their local maritime and cultural heritage through improved interpretation and activities such as guided walks.

With a target of 3,000 visitors per year, it is hoped the Museum will add to the tourism offer in the area and help boost the local economy.

Notes to editors

* HLF's Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) encourages partnerships of local organisations to carry out repairs and other works to a number of historic buildings, structures or spaces. Grants range from £500,000 to £2m. To date, HLF has invested over £200m regenerating towns that have suffered serious social and economic decline.

** 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.

Further information

Please contact Kate Sullivan or Helen Newton at Equinox Communications on 029 2076 4100 or kate@equinoxcommunications.co.uk / helen@equinoxcommunications.co.uk.