Opening of newly restored Coldingham Priory grounds

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In its day, the Benedictine Priory was the centre of economic, political, and social life of the region. Although the parish church stands in the former choir of the Priory, little remains of the once vast structure. But the remaining monastic walls and important masonry, including a fascinating ‘lapidarium’, have been painstakingly protected and consolidated for future generations to appreciate.

Julia Carter of the Friends of Coldingham Priory said: "The project has been made possible by the sustained effort and hard work of people over several years and drawn from different generations. We are very pleased to see the results which we have helped to plan and contribute to in many practical ways. We hope to continue caring for these surroundings and make Coldingham a special place."

Luke Comins, Director of Tweed Forum, who helped develop and coordinate the project, said: "This has been a real partnership effort from a number of organisations, individuals and funding bodies. However special mention has to go to the community who made the whole project work through their enthusiasm, dedication and hard work.

"The £480,000 project has a number of different facets. Firstly the consolidation of the Priory ruins and special masonry features including important gravestones and the ‘lapidarium’, an eclectic collection of carved stones from throughout the site’s long history."

Secondly, the conversion of derelict ground adjacent to the Priory into a community garden with planting to suggest a monastic orchard, wild flower areas to reflect their old medicinal and herbal use, inscribed stones recalling the local influence of early Christian saints and a semi-circular stone seat, built from recycled stone found on site.

Thirdly, the installation of a series of interpretation boards and literature to help people appreciate the scale and importance of the site in its heyday.

Fourthly, improved access through, and across, the site. Finally, an education programme that helped people of all ages appreciate and get involved in the site to a greater extent.’

Councillor Vicky Davidson, Scottish Borders Council Executive Spokesperson for Economic Development and Regeneration, stated: "The Council, as custodians of the Priory, are very pleased that through working in partnership we have been able to protect, enhance and promote this special place. We hope that the Priory and gardens will be enjoyed by both the community and visitors to this historic site."

Colin McLean, Head of HLF in Scotland, said: “The end of the conservation work at Coldingham Priory marks the beginning of a new era for this fascinating site which is steeped in Scottish history. The need to conserve the crumbling stonework has been the catalyst for an initiative which has inspired volunteers and local school children. With new paths, new interpretation and a community garden, it has become a place where youngsters can learn about their past while others can take time out from their busy lives and enjoy the heritage on their doorstep.”

Notes to editors

1. The £480,000 project is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Scotland, Scottish Borders Council, SBC Community Grant Scheme, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Robertson Trust and the Russell Trust.

2. Tweed Forum is the umbrella body with the aim of conserving the natural, built and cultural heritage of the Tweed catchment and has been coordinating the whole project on behalf of the various partners.

3. 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. To date it has invested over £500million in Scotland's heritage.

Further information

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