Christmas comes early to Prittlewell Priory with £1.3million boost

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) have announced their £1.3million award for the refurbishment of Prittlewell Priory Museum.

Following the provisional award from HLF in October last year, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council further developed their plans for the complete re-display of the museum, major structural repairs and improved accessibility for all. On the strength of these proposals, HLF have confirmed the full grant award and work can begin in the New Year.

The refurbished museum will tell the story of the Priory from its monastic days to its life as a Victorian house as well as the wildlife of the park.

Since discovery of structural problems at the Priory museum seven years ago and the subsequent closure of the upper floors, the refurbishment, repair and re-display of the museum has been a dream of those in the Museums Service and its supporting charity the Friends of Southend Museums.

David Amess, MP for Southend West, said: "This HLF funding is a wonderful Christmas present for Prittlewell Priory Museum. The grant will make it possible for the museum to undergo a complete refurbishment and will allow local residents and visitors alike to appreciate the fascinating history and wonderful surroundings of the town's first dedicated public museum. As one of the original pioneers of the National Lottery I could not be more delighted with this wonderful news. At this particular time, it’s just the sort of boost we need as Southend promotes itself as the region’s centre of culture."

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: “As a result of this award from HLF, work will be able to begin on this remarkable building so that it can be fully opened to visitors for the first time since 2001. This refurbishment and repair will also dramatically improve opportunities for local people to access the impressive collections held at Prittlewell Priory. This grant represents great value for lottery player's money and will create lasting benefit to the local community and these important local collections.”

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council’s Deputy Executive Councillor for Culture, Councillor John Lamb, said: “This tremendous news is a wonderful Christmas present to the people of Southend. Prittlewell Priory is Southend’s oldest heritage building which dates back to 12th Century. It stands on an ancient monument site. Thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund grant, we will be able return the Priory as closely as we can to how it was in former times. We can therefore let the building tell its own fascinating story, and make it accessible to the community in ways that have never been possible before.”

The funding, secured in the face of stiff competition, will in the first place enable detailed designs of the proposed new displays and of a small Visitor Centre to be drawn up. A full programme of events and educational activities will be hosted by the new museum, making the priory the focus for the whole town.

Both the Friends of Southend Museums and the Cory Environmental Trust have pledged sums to match fund the Lottery Grant.

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. Since 1994 HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK. The Heritage Lottery fund has granted a total of £282.3 million to more than 2,870 projects in the East of England alone.

Further information

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