Rare 19th century brickworks brought back to life with HLF boost

18/10/2012

Bursledon Brickworks, a complex of Grade II* listed industrial buildings near the River Hamble, Southampton, is set to undergo an exciting transformation. Although of national and international heritage importance, the current site does not do its fascinating story justice – at its peak, the site produced 20 million bricks every year. Saving and rejuvenating this special place is crucial. The grant will enable the museum to open more often, update the displays and improve visitors facilities.

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East England, said: “Our industrial heritage is something we should be hugely proud of – it helped build the world we live in today. Bursledon Brickworks is the perfect example of this and an incredible survivor of its time. We at the Heritage Lottery Fund are proud to be playing our part as a funder and helping to support the wonderful volunteers who have worked so hard to make this project happen. Once completed, the site will be far more accessible and all its stories will be readily available for everyone to learn from and enjoy.”

Alongside conservation works to the buildings, the project will include exciting and extensive learning activities, including a Lifelong Learning Plan, which will encourage people from across the local area and further afield to get involved. The sites impressive collections, made up of machinery and artefacts, will be restored and put on display – helping to recreate the brickwork’s original atmosphere and give people an insight into what life looked like to those who worked there and made bricks prior to industrialisation.

Volunteering is the cornerstone of this project and the site continues to run by a core group of dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers. Valuable training opportunities that cover topics such as conservation and management skills will be provided and a volunteer coordinator will be brought in to implement a proper management and activity strategy for the first time.

Another aspect of the project will be ensuring that everyone, no matter what age or ability, will have vastly improved access to the site. Improved disabled access from the car park to the main building and a lift to the first floor will transform the way people interact with and enjoy this slice of history that helped the nation grow.

Bill Fergie, Chair of Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust (owners of the Brickworks), said: “The Trust and volunteers at the Brickworks are delighted to have been awarded this grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. We have spent many years restoring the fascinating buildings and artefacts on the site and the grant will enable us to share this with a much wider audience. We are thrilled that this important part of our industrial history can now get the recognition it deserves.”

Notes to editors

The main aims of the Brickworks lottery project are:

- To encourage more people to visit the museum and make the site truly accessible for the first time in its history
- To bring the museum to life for all visitors both existing and new
- To ensure that the museum lives up to its potential as a learning environment

- To create a sustainable volunteer team with access to training and improved facilities
- To become an important focal point for the local community
- To stabilise the existing buildings and ensure their future survival
- To achieve a viable way forward for the next ten years

History of the Brickworks
Bursledon Brickworks was founded in 1897 by the Ashby family of brick makers from Chandlers Ford. The site was innovative in its approach with patented drying sheds which enabled the production of bricks all year round. At its peak it was producing 20 million bricks a year. As time passed, clay was worked further and further away and finally brought to the works by an overhead cable system from clay pits that now form the Swanwick Nature Reserve.

After the Second World War the business was merged and by 1959 was owned by the Redland plc. The difficulty in extracting clay and the out of date machinery were two of several reasons the Brickworks became unviable and they were closed in 1974. They were saved from redevelopment and were given a Grade II* listing before being sold to the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust for a token amount. The buildings were virtually derelict and an endowment for the preliminary restoration was provided by Redland plc.

Further information

Laura Bates, HLF press office, 020 7591 6028 / lbates@hlf.org.uk.

Carolyne Haynes, Bursledon Brickworks Industrial Museum, 01489 576 248 / admin@bursledonbrickworks.org.uk.