Robert Stephenson

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The legacy of engineer Robert Stephenson will be preserved for future generations thanks to two projects supported by Heritage Lottery Fund grants totalling more than £25,000. The projects will keep the achievements of the railway pioneer alive while the Robert Stephenson Trust makes arrangements for new premises following the loss of its South Street Works museum in Newcastle.

A touring exhibition, to be organised by the Trust, will visit several venues throughout the region while a collection of books and papers detailing Stephenson's work will be preserved and catalogued in a project to be run by The North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical, Engineers.

The Trust's project – which has received a £12,500 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) – will create an exhibition The Art of Robert Stephenson – Images of the Man, His Life and His Works. Over a three-year period this will tour the Tyne and Wear region with venues already confirmed in Alnwick, Berwick, Darlington, Morpeth and Shildon.

The exhibition will be complimented by a series of talks, activities for children and families, and an education pack for schools. The Institution of Civil Engineers and Newcastle City Council will be assisting the Trust in this work to engage children in practical activities that demonstrate the importance of engineering in the past and today.

The second project, for which the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers has received a £12,900 HLF grant, concentrates on the Institute's Wood Memorial Hall Library which has care of the Robert Stephenson Trust's collection of books and papers. The grant will enable the Grade II library itself to be cleaned and the Trust's collection to be classified, labelled, catalogued and placed on-line making it widely available to the public for the first time. This project will recruit up to 15 volunteers to undertake the work, offering the chance for local people to gain new skills.

Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North East, Ivor Crowther, said: "Taken together, these two projects will help to underwrite the legacy of Robert Stephenson and ensure that his many achievements in engineering and transportation are not only appreciated, but also introduced to a new generation."

Chairman of the Robert Stephenson Trust, Bob Longridge said: "Our exhibition and associated events would not have been possible without funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. We are very grateful."

Commenting for the North of England Institute of Mining and Mechanical Engineers, the president Malcolm Tilley, said: "We are delighted to be working in partnership with the Robert Stephenson Trust and HLF. Robert Stephenson's was our vice-president when he died in 1859 and left £2,000 in his will, a huge sum of money in those days. It is fitting we can assist the Trust that honours his name in this way. Housing the Trust's book collection compliments our own collection entirely and highlights the common ancestry and links between the railways and coal industry. We are also delighted to be able to welcome more volunteers who play such a vital role in maintaining Britain's heritage and we look forward to members of the public being able to use this important collection by Easter."

Notes to editors

Robert Stephenson (1803-1859) was the only son of George Stephenson, the railway pioneer and industrialist. In 1823, Robert co-founded and became the managing partner of the world's first locomotive factory known as the ‘Forth Street Works’, Newcastle upon Tyne. Here he designed and directed the construction of Rocket in1829, the prototype steam locomotive. Robert went on to design other significant locomotives and innovative railway structures such as the Britannia Bridge to cross the Menai Straits. He also served as MP for Whitby.

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 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

Further information

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