Crucial £10million lottery boost for UK’s run-down town centres

12/05/2009

Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) announces a welcome investment boost of almost £10million of earmarked funding* to back much-needed regeneration plans in eight run-down town centres right across the UK. This money is contributing to local improvement schemes totalling £36.75million.

From the Isle of Bute to the Norfolk coast, this money will enable local community organisations to work in partnership on conservation work and bring historic buildings back into use. This has the potential to boost local economies and improve the quality of the local environment for those who live or visit there.

This investment is part of HLF’s unique Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)**, which funds the regeneration of historic areas with serious social and economic needs. The scheme has been running for over ten years and these new awards will bring the total invested to over £200million. This additional money is set to create more than 170 construction and conservation jobs, hundreds of skills training opportunities and an anticipated 300 new jobs in the properties as they return to use***.

Rt Hon Andy Burnham MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport, said: "Culture is becoming part of our mainstream planning for recovery and regeneration. We can see it in this announcement from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This £17 million investment is really welcome – investing in people and places at the same time, creating new jobs and hundreds of training opportunities whilst breathing new life into historic buildings that have been neglected."

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said: “Our research shows that these schemes can really help turn local economies around, not only by improving how run-down historic towns look and feel, but also by prompting business start-ups and creating new jobs. This investment means that eight more town centres will enjoy the far-reaching benefits of this highly successful initiative.

"Looking after our heritage is an incredibly effective way of supporting community life generally. This is recognised in today’s Government strategy for improving quality of place. Serious investment like this goes well beyond looking after the bricks and mortar of a building, bringing with it substantial social and economic benefits too.”

The towns set to benefit are:

- Pontefract, W Yorkshire - a market town since the Middle Ages
- Keighley, W Yorkshire - a culturally diverse town on the edge of Bronte Country
- Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland - historic border market town famous for changing hands between England and Scotland no less than 14 times
- Great Yarmouth, Norfolk – boasting one of the most complete medieval town walls in England and a popular seaside resort
- Rothesay, Isle of Bute - the Isle’s principal town and home to a 13-century ruined castle unique in Scotland for its circular plan

- Pontypool, Monmouthshire - once one of the most prosperous and industrially vital towns in the whole of Europe, if not the world
- Bridgend, Glamorgan - this town played an important role during the Second World War being home to a prisoner of war camp and large munitions factory
- Wigan, Lancashire - former industrial town with a history dating back to the Romans with over 200 listed buildings.

In April 2009, HLF also confirmed £2.75million of THI grants to three of Wales' most deprived towns, Aberdare, Dolgellau and Flint. This confirmed funding is expected to create in the region of 200 jobs and training opportunities.

Notes to editors

* Today, the Government is launching its strategy for quality of place entitled 'World Class Places', laying out the key opportunities and challenges ahead. A joint initiative between CLG and DCMS departments, the report sets out the broad strategic objectives and actions that will be taken to improve quality of place.

A media event will be held at The Deck (3rd floor), National Theatre, South Bank, London SE1 9PX on 12 May from 4pm with presentations from 4.30pm. CABE is organising the event on behalf of Government. Contact Bianca Mathews if you wish to attend (bmathews@cabe.org.uk)

** A Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) earmarked first-round pass means that money has been set aside by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the scheme in question. Competition at this stage is tough, and while it does not guarantee funding, it is an indication of positive support. The applicant can then progress to the second round and submit a further, fully-developed application to secure the full award. On occasion, development funding will also be awarded at the first round. This early level of strong financial commitment means that THI's can build strong partnerships with the assurance that funding for their scheme is in place provided their final proposals fully meet the programme criteria.

*** Employment figures are based on an analysis of job creation in previous HLF THI schemes. Typically, one year of short-term construction or conservation employment is created for every £60,000 of capital investment and estimates of non-construction and conservation jobs are based on plans to use property space that have been bought back into use as part of the overall regeneration scheme.

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 more than 28,800 projects, allocating over £4.3billion across the UK.

The breakdown of the £10million earmarked investment is as follows:

- Pontefract – THI first-round pass of £788,500 including £38,500 development funding
- Keighley Town Centre – THI first-round pass of £2,050,000 including £50,000 development funding
- Berwick-upon-Tweed – THI first-round pass of £625,700 including £17,000 development funding
- Great Yarmouth – THI first-round pass of £2,043,100 including £43,100 development funding
- Rothesay – THI first-round pass of £1,550,000 including £50,000 development funding
- Pontypool – THI first-round pass of £899,500 including £50,000 development funding

- Bridgend – THI first-round pass of £562,300 including £20,000 development funding
- Wigan – THI first-round pass of £1,250,000 including £50,000 development funding
- Creswell Model Village, Derbyshire – received a grant increase of £222,000 for their current scheme.

THI success stories

The Merchant City, Glasgow
HLF's grant of £1.6million helped to fund the extensive regeneration of Glasgow's historic core, which was once the administrative heart of Scotland's second city. This investment helped to repair buildings and enhance shop fronts, reintroduced traditional paving and installed new street furniture. The most important project, the Rochead Building, is now in use with shops on the ground floor and hotel accommodation above. Other major projects were the refurbishment and transformation of the City Halls/Fruit Market complex, increasing its popularity as an entertainment venue. The Tron Steeple, an important local landmark, was also repaired. This scheme was completed in 2006 and HLF has awarded £800,000 for a second THI which will create an 'arts quarter'.

Great Yarmouth, Norfolk
A £2million HLF grant contributed to the extensive regeneration of four Conservation Areas in Great Yarmouth's medieval town and Victorian seaside quarter. A number of key buildings and shop fronts in the historic 'Rows' shopping area were restored and the area is now the focus for visiting families. Several buildings 'at risk' were brought back into use and the town wall was repaired. Great Yarmouth has now been awarded a THI first-round pass of £2,043,100 for a further THI scheme.

Major investment boost to heritage and the economy
In conjunction with today's Government's strategy, HLF and English Heritage (EH) are also announcing today a package of grants worth £7million for essential repairs to Grade II listed places of worship (RPOW) across England. The grants will help to repair 56 historic places of worship which are used by a broad range of faiths. In total, the combined RPOW and THI investment of £17million will be part of an investment boost for schemes totalling more than £47million. Together, these are expected to deliver over 345 direct conservation and construction jobs, with upwards of 300 longer term new jobs and hundreds of new skills training opportunities.