'Anster' nets substantial Heritage Lottery investment

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In this, Fife's Year of Culture, the economic fortunes of Anstruther in the East Neuk are set to be turned around thanks to funding announced today for the development of several projects which aim to capitalise on Fife's growing artistic sector. The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded earmarked funding* of £915,000 and development funding of £30,000 as part of its hugely successful Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI).

The Townscape Heritage Initiative is a unique approach to urban regeneration and sustainable development using heritage as the catalyst. Run down areas are regenerated by repairing and giving new uses to historic buildings, making them more appealing places to invest, work, and live in.

The picturesque coastal village of Anstruther was once described by James II as 'a fringe of gold on a beggar's mantle'. However, a lack of employment has taken the shine off this centuries old port and the poor condition of some prominent buildings now blight the historic character of the town.

The THI project aims to turn that around and inject a new vitality. Key buildings including the Hew Scott Hall, St Nicholas Tower and Anstruther Wester Town Hall, all of which are on the Buildings at Risk register, would be sensitively restored and transformed into a combination of community facilities and a music venue. Other buildings which would benefit include the Murray Library Building on the shore and the derelict Masonic Hall which would help address the need for local low cost housing. Integral to the THI will be a programme of training opportunities for local people and businesses.

Welcoming the announcement, Radio 1 DJ and television presenter, Edith Bowman, who comes from Anstruther, said: "This is such wonderful news and great that the wealth of talent in Anstruther is having such a huge investment to develop and nurture that talent. The heritage of my home town is what makes is so warm and appealing and such a beautiful place to live and visit. It's been a long time coming but now it gives everyone a real sense of confidence and pride to have a huge investment and commitment. I'm really looking forward to seeing it develop."

Commenting from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Colin McLean, said; "Investment like this goes well beyond the bricks and mortar of any building. THI schemes can really help turn local economies around, not only by improving how they look and feel, but by creating new jobs and training opportunities and encouraging tourism. It will be wonderful to see new life breathed into Anstruther's historic buildings and we are delighted that it is our Townscape Heritage Initiative that is helping drive it forward."

Cllr Elizabeth Riches, Chairman of the Murray Library Trustees welcomed the exciting news. She and her fellow Trustees look forward to consulting with the public on the best ways to ensure the prominent building is restored to its former glory and also provides for the community in ways that respect its original trust deed. These will involve recreational and educational opportunities.

She added: "The next year will be very busy for everyone involved, with lots of consultation as projects are developed. We hope to have them up and running in a couple of years."

Alan Lodge, Manager of Fife Historic Buildings Trust, was delighted with the news and added: “We can now start to work closely with the community and building owners to make these plans a reality. There is a great deal of hard work ahead but what a challenge!”

To date HLF has invested almost £40million in 30 town centres across Scotland, levering many millions more in partnership funding and bringing real economic benefit to the towns as well as restoring community pride. Fife has received four of these grants including: £750,000 for West Wymss (completed); £1m for Kirkcaldy Riggs THI (completed); £990,000 for Kinghorn & Burntisland THI; and £1,587,000 for Dysart THI.

Notes to editors

The Townscape Heritage Initiative is a Heritage Lottery Grant giving programme which supports schemes led by partnerships of local, regional and national interests that aim to regenerate the historic environment. Together with other organisations the HLF contributes to a common fund which is managed by a partnership to allocate funds towards conservation work on individual projects and support a range of activities that encourage involvement in the heritage and improve understanding and enjoyment of it.

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.

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