St Fagans National History Museum

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A ten-year strategy to redevelop Wales's most popular visitor attraction into a National History Museum for Wales was given a huge boost today. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has given the green light to work up plans to make major improvements to St Fagans. Development funding of £450,000 has been awarded to Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales to help progress the project.

The HLF first-round pass* means that Amgueddfa Cymru is able to move to the second stage of the HLF application process. It has up to two years to submit more detailed plans and apply for the remainder of the £8.7m HLF support that it is seeking for its £20.75m project.

St Fagans: National History Museum was opened in 1948 as the first open-air museum in the UK, with the aim of portraying how the people of Wales lived, worked and spent their leisure time over the last 500 years.

Today, St Fagans has over 40 original buildings, moved from various parts of Wales and re-erected to show different periods in history. It is Wales's most popular visitor attraction and the second most visited open-air museum in Europe, attracting over 600,000 free visits a year.

The plans that Amgueddfa Cymru is seeking HLF support for are directed towards:

• The introduction of the National Archaeology Collection and extended time-line to cover the 250,000 years of human inhabitation of the geographical area now known as Wales. Investment will be made into interpretation across the site so that visitors are able to experience the story of the place and peoples of Wales and understand how they fitted into the backdrop of world history.

• Creating an integrated indoor and outdoor experience within the unique wooded landscape of the St Fagans site. A new indoor space will be created in the grounds, providing an important all-weather facility away from the existing main building. The existing main building galleries will be totally refurbished to create flexible learning and display spaces.

• An expanded programme of events and activities to reflect the extended time-line covered on site, with the emphasis on interactive experiences suitable for all ages and levels of interest. The Museum is also keen to offer more volunteer opportunities and extend its involvement with the communities in the area.

• The geographic integration of the site so that visitors are more easily able to enjoy and to understand the context St Fagans Castle and the historic landscape. This will be achieved through improvements to physical orientation and access across the site and through improved interpretive material.

• Upgrading the visitor facilities to create a much higher level of visitor comfort and enjoyment. The provision of additional galleries, activity spaces and more wet weather provision will turn St Fagans into a year-round experience. Additional catering outlets will be created and wet-weather provision will be greatly enhanced through the refurbishment of and creation of new gallery space.

Commenting on the award of development funding, Amgueddfa Cymru Director General Mike Houlihan, said: "We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given its initial support for this exciting and iconic project for the whole of

Wales.

“During the last 60 years, St Fagans has become the home of Welsh history - part of the fabric of Welsh identity. It is already the place to which many people from Wales and tourists from all over the world make a pilgrimage to experience the story of the nation and the ordinary people of Wales.

“We aim to meet the highest of expectations through creating a truly year-round visitor attraction at St Fagans. It will present a strong message of change and national self-confidence by telling authentic and powerful stories and sharing an attractive range of experiences with the visiting public.

“Our aim is to reinforce the position of St Fagans as a world class museum and must-see attraction for visitors to Wales – an essential element of Wales’s cultural tourism offer - worthy not only of Government backing but also commercial sponsorship and the support of grant-awarding bodies and individuals who want to promote Wales in the twenty-first century.”

Jennifer Stewart, Head of HLF in Wales, said: “St Fagans has played a leading role in defining and exploring Welsh identity, and we support the Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales’ initial plans to enhance this understanding and create an exciting new visitor experience.

“According to research it is our living heritage that most inspires visitors and the proposed expansion of interactive interpretative facilities, and experiences at St Fagans will provide the people of Wales and visitors with inspirational encounters with the past.

“We were also impressed with plans for volunteers to take an active role in the life of the museum and sharing the stories of Wales as wide as possible. As such the proposal has met a number of our priorities and we have awarded a development grant in recognition of the project’s potential and the benefits it could bring to Wales. There is huge competition for our grants so Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales now need to develop its plans fully in order to compete for a firm award.”

The Heritage Minister, Alun Ffred Jones, said: “I am delighted that Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales has received this excellent news from the Heritage Lottery Fund. St Fagans has a very special place in the affections of the people of Wales. This re-development will retain what makes the site so unique and popular, while transforming it into a world-class visitor attraction. It will also act as a gateway to our history and culture for tourists visiting Wales.

“I would like to congratulate the Museum on all their work to date and look forward to the next stage of this exciting re-development.”

Notes to editors

*A first-round pass means the project meets our criteria for funding and we believe it has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.

On occasion an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their 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 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales operate seven sites across Wales. These are National Museum Cardiff, St Fagans: National History Museum, National Roman Legion Museum, Caerleon, Big Pit: National Coal Museum, Blaenafon, National Wool Musuem, Dre-fach Felindre, National Slate Musuem, Llanberis and the National Waterfront Museum, Swansea. Entry to each museum is free thanks to the support of the Welsh Assembly Government.

Tourism Figures

• Four in 10 leisure visitors cite heritage as the main motivation for their trip to the UK – more than any other single factor.
• 53% of the population make a trip to experience the atmosphere of a historic town or city at least once a year.
• 42% visit a museum or gallery.
• The total number of visits to museums and galleries has been estimated at over 40 million a year.
• 1.2 billion visits are made to the countryside.
• Over 10 million visits are made to historic park.
• More than 38 million to historic houses, cathedrals and castles.
• More than 250 million to Britain's inland canals and waterways.
• Historic houses in private ownership play a crucial part in supporting 14 million visitors each year.
• The size of the UK heritage-tourism sector (including natural heritage) is in excess of £12.4billion a year and supports an estimated 195,000 full-time-equivalent jobs – this makes the sector bigger than the advertising, car or film industries.
• The relative importance of domestic tourism is clear – £7.5billion worth of expenditure, or 60% of the total, is spending by UK residents making day trips and taking holidays in the UK.

Further information

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