Visit to Stowe House will impress

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The project – Enlightenment for All – at Stowe House in north Buckinghamshire – is being made possible by a grant of more than £800,000 by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Stowe House and its surrounding landscape gardens – both Grade I listed – have been described as a who's who of great architecture and design, featuring the work of Sir John Vanbrugh, Capability Brown, Robert Adam and Sir John Soane among many other notables.

The Stowe House Preservation Trust will transform visitor access and enjoyment of the 18th century palace by creating new ways by which people can understand the building, its stories and what inspired the people who created and lived in it through the centuries.

Key improvements will include imaginative new resources for families and young people, full access for disabled people, working with the surrounding community, a substantial increase in volunteering opportunities, and new ways for schoolchildren, families and young people to become involved.

The Trust will be working closely with the National Trust, which opens up the landscape gardens to the public, and Stowe School, which has occupied the building since 1923.

In addition to converting the old Servants' Hall and Cellar to provide the new learning and discovery centre, the project will create two new posts – a full-time community engagement officer and a part-time learning officer. Cutting edge technology will be employed to provide interactive audio-visual experiences and temporary exhibitions will become a regular feature.

An exciting and varied programme of activities will include creative projects for families and young people, workshops for primary and secondary schoolchildren, resources for colleges and universities, outreach sessions and a varied range of events and activities.

Local young people and families will be encouraged to get involved in the development of the project by creating artwork, installations, design projects and digital media that will help to interpret Stowe's stories for visitors. Volunteering opportunities for all ages will give local people the chance to work on consultation groups, act as guides and help deliver a range of newly planned activities and events.

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East England, said: "Stowe is an historical resource of national and international importance. This project will help unlock a wealth of information to enrich a visit to this magnificent Georgian palace. The involvement of local communities and young people is a particular strength of what the Stowe House Preservation Trust has planned."

Jenna Spellane, Project Officer at Stowe House, said: "The project will capture Stowe's spirit of creativity and imagination by bringing its stories to life with exciting new 'wow factor' experiences that will captivate wide audiences. Our local communities will be able to participate in imaginative and creative projects that will reflect Stowe's character as one of England's most inspiring and beautiful historic estates."

Notes to editors

Stowe was the ancestral home of the Temple-Grenville family which produced four British Prime Ministers; William Pitt the Elder, William Pitt the Younger, George Grenville and William Wyndham Grenville. The house was built in the 1680s and extensively remodelled throughout the 18th century. The near bankruptcy of the family led to the sale of much of the contents of the house in 1848. In 1922 the last heiress, Lady Kinloss, was forced to sell the house and the building might have been demolished had it not been taken over as Stowe School which maintained the house and gardens until the latter passed to the care of the National Trust in 1989. The house in 2000 became the responsibility of the Stowe House Preservation Trust, which was formed to restore, interpret and increase access to Stowe House. The house has 400 rooms and the longest enfilade of state rooms in the country, extending for one sixth of a mile. The landscape gardens cover 250 acres and contains over 40 temples and monuments. The house captures the beauty and architecture of ancient Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Chinese and Saxon cultures and demonstrates how traditions from all over the world can inspire new creativity, thinking and design. Visit the Stowe House website.

Hampshire County Council Property Services has been appointed by Stowe House Preservation Trust to design and coordinate the conversion of the old Servants Hall and Cellar within Stowe House into the new learning and discovery centre with fully accessible entrance. The multi-disciplinary practice includes a team of specialist conservation architects who have delivered a number of award-winning, high-quality and innovative projects involving the conversion and extension of listed buildings, many with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Further information

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