Heritage Lottery Fund success for new National



Artist's impression of the Civil War Gallery in the Old Magnus Building

The Heritage Lottery Fund is supporting Newark and Sherwood District Council's plans to develop the Old Magnus Buildings into a new museum and civil war centre to showcase the district's pivotal role in the English Civil War (1642-1646).

The projects - which total £5.4m - will transform the Grade II* listed former school buildings on Appletongate, Newark into a nationally-recognised centre for learning about the conflict. Working with architects Purcell, development work is anticipated to take two years.

The museum is due to open September 2014 with an exhibition commemorating the centenary of First World War. Further exhibition galleries will focus on the local history of the towns and villages of this area. The Newark Torc will be displayed in the centre - the first time it will have been displayed in the district after it was loaned to the British Museum in London.

The centre is set to attract more than 60,000 visitors each year by providing a museum and events programme with national interest around civil war history. The museum will link the Queen's Sconce, Newark Castle and the district's heritage. A further 17,000 people will be involved in living history days, a conference programme and through events and activities for the public.

Emma Sayer, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands, said: “The Old Magnus Buildings are a key part of Newark’s heritage and can play an important part in telling the story of the English Civil Wars. This HLF investment will transform these vacant buildings into a vibrant, informative and fun place to be for local people and visitors to enjoy and learn about this special part of our heritage. We are proud to support Newark and Sherwood District Council’s ambitious project plans that will not only restore these historic buildings but also feed into wider regeneration schemes in the area.”

The council previously made a successful first round funding application for £200,000 to the HLF for the project. This money has been used to establish more in-depth information of the proposed building and its indicative design.

Applications have been made to grant-funding bodies in order to supplement the project budget following the successful HLF application. The Friends of Newark and Sherwood Museums are undertaking various fundraising activities, including a long distance sponsored walk along the Trent Valley, following key civil war sites.

Further details can be found on the Civil War Network website. The council will also underwrite any shortfall in funding to ensure the project is completed.

The project manager, Bryony Robins, said: “This is an exciting project that will provide a state of the art museum, restore important heritage buildings and bring history to life. The project is more than a museum, it’s the development of a site that will become a resource for the people of Newark and Sherwood and a national tourist attraction.

We hope to stage musical performances and readings in partnership with other local organisations and businesses. During the development we will hold open days so people can see the work in progress and learn about heritage skills. Placements will be created for apprentices from local colleges to learn about specialist heritage construction skills.”

The museum will house a café within the historic Tudor Hall, linking to the courtyard garden. Features such as the historic graffiti and possible historic painting will be conserved, displayed and interpreted for visitors.

The museum will also have a community room for evening talks and museum friends’ activities, a meeting room and a learning space in the old gymnasium. It will be the first time the council’s museums’ service will have had a dedicated learning space for school groups. The museum will be able to cater for more school visits and provide more varied activities for children.

The Flying Objects programme will take museum objects into the community, supported by workshops, talks, performances and activities run by museum staff and volunteers. The local drama company, Nearly Instant Theatre Sessions, will be staging a play and workshops about civil war history and the Old Magnus Buildings in 20 primary schools in the district.

The council’s cabinet member for Leisure and Culture, Cllr Roger Jackson, said: “These are really exciting times and the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund is vital in making the National Civil War Centre a reality, putting the district on the map and attracting more visitors to the region. The new museum will provide a hub for tourism, directing visitors to attractions and cultural sites across the district.

The HLF grant is a testament to the hard work provided by the team, the Friends, our volunteers and through input from public consultation. We are grateful for the support shown by the community, which has made the project stronger.”

Andrew Muter, Chief Executive of Newark and Sherwood District Council, said: “This project is a key priority for the district council and will play a major part in the development of heritage, tourism and the local economy. The Heritage

Lottery Fund grant comes at a vital time and will ensure that the historic buildings will be conserved for future generations, and opened once again to the public.”

Notes to editors

The market town of Newark was transformed into a much-contested Royalist stronghold during the English Civil War (1642–1646) as it occupied a strategic location on the Great North Road, the Fosse Way, and the River Trent, ensuring that whichever side controlled the town held the ‘Key to the Kingdom’, disrupting communications, supply routes and troop movements by the other.

The extensive nature of Newark’s well-preserved siege works, such as the Queen’s Sconce at Sconce and Devon Park, and the detail on its rare surviving 1646 Parliamentarian siege plan, signify the importance of sieges in military strategy during the Civil War as well as the skill of military engineers.

All this makes the town, and the Old Magnus Buildings, the ideal place for telling the English Civil War’s story, and providing a national centre for people to learn all about the war.