Thinktank Made in Birmingham gallery to go ahead

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has just confirmed a grant of nearly £900,000* to Thinktank so that hundreds of items in previously unseen collections can be displayed in an exciting new exhibition gallery called **Made in Birmingham.**

Promising cutting edge heritage interpretation in a major new, experimental thematic gallery, **Made in Birmingham** has been developed in close consultation with museum visitors of all ages and will provide an important learning environment for everyone from pre-school to adult learners.

Anne Jenkins, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for the West Midlands, said: “This exciting project means that Thinktank can now further bring to life its nationally important Science and Industry Collection as well as the Natural Science Collection in a new gallery that will transform the experience of visitors of all ages. When complete it will expose the fascinating tale of Birmingham’s manufacturing heritage as the ‘workshop of the world’, and show how innovations in materials and manufacturing from the past are paralleled in industrial developments today.”

Expected to open to the public in December 2012, **Made in Birmingham** will encourage the city to get thinking about science, open up displays to new audiences, and exhibit more items to the public than ever before. There will be five themed displays that will see up to 1,200 objects on show, including:

- Orientation – this section will introduce the gallery and show that all the materials we use ultimately come from the Earth.
- Gadgets – displaying artefacts for home and leisure made from wood and plastics, from toys to telephones.
- Tins and Things– exploring how glass and aluminium is processed and used in packaging and cookware.
- Treasure – revealing and the beauty and value of gemstones and precious metals such as gold and silver.
- Nuts and Bolts – exposing the use of iron and steel in Birmingham machines, components, and products from pen nibs to the Mini.

Birmingham’s Science and Industry collection contains over 40,000 artefacts from over 250 years of scientific, technological and industrial development in Birmingham and the Midlands, which in particular reveal the city’s international reputation for machine tools in a collection spanning 200 years of development. This includes Ralph Heaton’s 1794 button shank making machine – one of the first machines in the world to make a single product. It also displays part of the largest Natural Sciences collection in the West Midlands. In addition to a valued collection of zoology, flora and fauna of the region, Thinktank will draw on Birmingham’s nationally important collection of some 10,000 rough and cut gemstones, which will be imaginatively interpreted as part of the **Made in Birmingham** gallery to reveal Birmingham’s rich heritage as a centre for jewellery making.

Explaining further what the state-of-the-art development will mean for the museum and its visitors, Cllr Len Clark, Chairman of Thinktank Trust, said: “We are thrilled that the Heritage Lottery Fund is helping us to develop this extraordinary new addition to the museum. Birmingham has a rich and diverse heritage of manufacturing, and it’s fantastic that we are able to better showcase this to our visitors.”

Shabana Mahmood, MP for Ladywood, Birmingham, also offered her support for the project: "Thinktank continues to go from strength to strength and I look forward to visiting the new exhibition when it opens next year. Birmingham has such

a rich history that we should all be proud of, and thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund visitors will be able to reflect on the city's past and how the area is developing today."

Notes to editors

*The HLF grant to the project **Made in Birmingham** is for £894,000 (44% of project costs) and is a confirmed award.

To date, HLF have made 480 awards in Birmingham amounting to just over £62.2million. Birmingham is a Priority Development Area within the West Midlands as HLF has historically received fewer applications from this area compared with others within the region.

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 30,000 projects, allocating over £4.5billion across the UK, including £319million to projects in the West Midlands alone.

Further information

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