Wanted: young people to root for heritage in the West Midlands!

07/03/2012

Over the past decade more than 5,000 young people in the West Midlands have taken part in 100 projects exploring a wide range of topics from social history and the built and natural environment, to archaeology and even the heritage of sport, fashion, and culture.

The event, to be hosted at the Hippodrome Theatre, Birmingham on Monday 12 March 2012, will bring together young people and those who work with them. It also marks - from April 2012 - an increase in funding available to groups. Young people's groups are now able to apply for grants up to £50,000 – double the amount currently available.

Reyahn King, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands, explains: "Drawing on our ten years of experience we know that the richness and diversity of this country's heritage has the power to inspire young people from all backgrounds and all communities. In turn, they inspire their communities with their unique interpretations and presentations of what they've learned through social media and the arts. Heritage is not only about revitalising museums and restoring historic buildings, important though that can be. It is about local communities, their social history, traditions and cultural identity and it is also about conserving natural habitats."

Young people and youth workers attending the event will find a range of well-known local organisations on hand to provide insight into how to get involved in their local heritage. These include Birmingham Archives and Library Service, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, The Faith Connected Foundation, and the Oral History Society.

They will also be able to hear first hand accounts and useful tips from Young Roots projects that have already taken place. Friction Arts helped a group of young people from Birmingham's Five Ways Estate to interview elders and learn more about their family stories and migration to the city from around the world. The youngsters then produced a drama performance and an exhibition featuring audio clips of people's stories as part of an art installation in a restored fishing boat.

Lee Griffiths, co-director of Friction Arts said: "Working with HLF on our Young Roots project Iland Life gave us a great opportunity to engage young people with their shared heritage. Three years later, we've been able to build on this and continue to inspire and excite young people in Birmingham to connect with their histories, and their communities."

Reyahn King added that HLF is keen to hear from local groups who are interested in applying for funding: "The great thing about Young Roots is that it ensures young people are in the driving seat; they can define their own heritage and make decisions about how they want to celebrate it. Young people are injecting energy and fresh ideas into local heritage projects; they are developing new skills and picking up invaluable experience for their CVs by putting their own projects together. We want to hear from anyone working with young people to discuss the type of projects we can support."

Young Roots projects offer a wide range of benefits to all, including:

• Encouraging partnerships between heritage and youth organisations, creating more opportunities for young people to explore and define their heritage in fun and creative ways

• Bringing older and younger people together to share stories
• Supporting young people to lead projects, helping to build self-esteem and confidence
• Creating opportunities for young people to develop life-long skills inside and outside the heritage sector

Notes to editors

Event information
Young people and organisations working with them are encouraged to attend the free celebration event on Monday 12 March at the Hippodrome Theatre, Hurst Street, Birmingham B5 4TB - 10am and 2.15pm including a buffet lunch.

Anyone wishing to attend should contact Dee Tranter or Tariq Khan at the Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands on 0120 616 6870 email westmidlands@hlf.org.uk

Young Roots HLF grant scheme
In the past ten years the HLF has awarded more than £27million to over 1,250 Young Roots projects throughout the UK. In the West Midlands an estimated 5,000 young people have so far taken part in 100 projects that between them have been awarded £2.2m in grants by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Changes to the scheme from April 2012 include:

- An increased UK-wide budget of £4m per year (up from £3m)
- Applicants will be able to apply for up to £50,000 for a project (up from £25,000)
- The age range of those who can take part will now be 11-25 (formerly 13-25)
- Projects can now take place over a period of two years (formerly 18 months)

Further information

For further information please contact Vicky Wilford, HLF press office, on; 020 7591 6046 / 07973 401 937, email vickyw@hlf.org.uk or Phil Cooper, HLF press office, on: 07889 949 173.