New lease of life for Old Town

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The funding has been secured by Copeland Borough Council through the HLF's Townscape Heritage Initiative.
The project will focus on several key properties, including the former YMCA building, within the market place and neighbouring streets at the southern edge of the Whitehaven Town Centre Conservation area. The streets where the repair and restoration work will now take place formed Whitehaven's earliest commercial centre but have been in decline for some years despite being home to a number of small, independent retailers.

The plan, which is also backed by more than £390,000 from Britain's Energy Coast and £250,000 from Copeland BC, is to improve the physical appearance and viability of key buildings helping to bring an economic boost to the neighbourhood. The council's plans for the Old Town THI have been given an emphatic thumbs-up by local people. A key project is the restoration of the prominent but dilapidated YMCA, a Grade II listed building dating from the mid-18th Century.

An essential part of the work will be to restore original features to buildings within the Old Town and to remove poor-quality repairs or inappropriate alterations made over the years. Photographic and other documentary records will be used to help in the restoration process, where original chimneys have been removed they will be replaced using traditional materials, new or salvaged slate will be used on roofs and non-traditional timber or plastic windows will be replaced with vertically sliding sash wooden windows.
Shop fronts will be replaced and, where possible, living accommodation will be re-instated in upper floors. Public space will also be given a much-needed makeover to remove street clutter.

Local residents, shop owners and traders worked in partnership with the council to help develop the project and property owners will themselves be making contributions to the work. Skills training will also be a feature with courses ranging from taster days for the complete beginner to masterclasses for those in the construction industry to ensure local people gain the heritage skills necessary to care for the buildings in the future. The public will be kept fully informed about the scheme and its progress through leaflets, newsletters and eye-catching shop window posters.

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West England, said: "Whitehaven is within a development area for HLF so I'm delighted that this project will go ahead and will contribute towards the rejuvenation of an historic part of the town bringing a much-needed economic boost to the area."

Councillor Mike McVeigh, Copeland BC's Heritage Champion, said: "I am absolutely delighted that all the funding is now in place for this project, which will significantly upgrade an important historic area of Whitehaven. Heritage and economy go hand in hand and improvements of this kind can only serve to boost the town. It is an exciting project and I look forward to seeing the changes it will bring. I would also like to heartily commend the fantastic work done by our staff on this bid."

Further information

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