Wiltshire council secures Heritage Lottery Fund Support

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Wiltshire Council has recently been awarded £30,100 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Virtual Landscapes project which will take place in four locations in Wiltshire.

Led by young people aged 11 to 25 from Tidworth, Ludgershall, Pewsey and Westbury, the project focuses on the heritage of the figures in the county. It provides the opportunity to explore their identity and significance through creative media activities, storytelling and reworking old media and archives to bring new life to the figures from the landscape around them.

There are chalk hill figures dotted across the UK but Wiltshire is unique in being home to eight White Horses dating from ancient to modern day, as well as a range of 20th Century military badges across the landscape. The project looks at why they are important to young people in Wiltshire and their significance for the transitory military communities.

Stuart Wheeler, cabinet member for culture, said: “It’s brilliant we have received this lottery funding to help young people from the county learn all about the heritage, history and significance of these recognisable landmarks.”

The project will enable young people from these areas to discover the origins of them by working with heritage professionals, visiting the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre in Chippenham and the chalk hill figures.

Professional artists will work with the young people to help them create their own interpretations using a range of creative media technologies and to share them with friends and relatives online. Virtual Landscapes will also offer young people involved the chance to achieve an Arts Award, a nationally recognised qualification by taking part and sharing their experiences with others.

Commenting on the grant award, Richard Bellamy, HLF's acting Head of South West, said: “Although chalk figures are found in other parts of the country, they are a characteristic feature of Wiltshire’s rural landscape. The fact that so many have survived in the county and that in some instances new figures have been created, is a tribute to the motivation of local people in caring for them. We are delighted to support this project, which will stimulate the interest of a new generation in the figures, ensuring their survival into the future.”

The Arts Service is working with Wiltshire Youth Arts Partnership (WYAP) and the Wiltshire & Swindon History Centre to deliver this project. People who would like more information about the project, or know someone who would like to get involved, should email arts@wiltshire.gov.uk. WYAP can be followed on twitter @WyapArts

Notes to editor

Photo attached of Preshute or Marlborough White Horse: This white horse was cut in 1804 by pupils of a boys' school run by a Mr Greasley's Academy in the High Street, Marlborough. The horse was designed by a pupil called William Canning, of the Manor House, Ogbourne St George, who also marked it out on the hill. It was scoured every year, and this scouring became a much-loved tradition at the school.

The Arts Service. Wiltshire Council recognises that it has a role to play in the development of the arts in Wiltshire. The arts cover a wide range of creative opportunities including visual arts and crafts, media arts, performing arts and literature. We appreciate that the arts are important to individual well being and provide both social opportunities and a means of addressing wider social agendas. The council aims to help and encourage everybody in the community to have equal access to a range of high quality arts opportunities, either as participants or audiences. We work in partnership with other organisations to make sure the arts opportunities on offer reflect the needs of the local community.

Wiltshire Youth Arts Partnership is a partnership between Wiltshire Council Integrated Youth Service and the Wiltshire Council Arts Service. Our purpose is to stimulate and deliver high quality arts opportunities for 13-21 year olds in Wiltshire. WYAP's activities will encourage young people to develop a life-long involvement in the arts; as artists, future arts professionals, audiences and participants. The intention is that young people gain an understanding and enthusiasm for learning through the arts, enabling them to achieve their full potential, both as individuals and members of wider communities.

The Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre is a service provided by Wiltshire Council in partnership with Swindon Borough Council. It cares for over 7 miles of documents dating from 1150 to the present, over 35,000 books about Wiltshire and 45,000 photographs. It is also the home of Wiltshire Council's archaeology service, arts service and conservation and museum advisory service. It offers a range of services to schools including Victorian resource packs and local history workshops. We are open to the public Tuesday-Friday 9.30-5.30 and Saturday 9.30-5.00.