Young people to raise the roof on town’s history

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Performing arts charity Razed Roof will work with the young researchers to build a picture of how Harlow grew from its modest beginnings - the original town now referred to as Old Harlow - to its development after World War II with its modern layout, transport systems and buildings, and Britain’s first pedestrian precinct.

The main focus will be the impact of this redevelopment on older local residents some of whom will be interviewed by the young people to gain their first-hand accounts of moving to the area from the East End of London as a result of the widespread damage suffered there during the War. The project has been called InForm and the young people, some of whom have learning disabilities, will not only boost their own knowledge of the area, but will be able to share it with a wider audience by devising a special event at which their discoveries will be presented in a variety of ways, including a display and a dramatic presentation.

A particular aspect of the town that will feature in the project is sculpture, reflecting the fact that the local council agreed two years ago to name Harlow as the Sculpture Town where a treasure trove of public works of art from such famous names as Henry Moore, Auguste Rodin, Barbara Hepworth and Elizabeth Frink can be seen. The town is also home to a sculpture garden designed by the town’s planner and architect Sir Frederick Gibberd.

Local museum artefacts and archives, and a collection of historic 19th century bicycles will also feature in the one-year project that has received its grant from the HLF’s Young Roots programme.

Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, Robyn Llewellyn, said: “This project is a great example of what HLF’s Young Roots grants are all about. Young people will be involved in making the project happen and have the chance to engage meaningfully with their local surroundings and neighbours.”

For Razed Roof, artistic director Annette Lidster said: “This idea began when members of the group were remembering when they were young. This is a fascinating new venture for us and we hope to have lots of fun in unearthing some of the treasures, and possibly secrets, of Harlow. We will share our discoveries using a range of performance skills to enable all members of the group to make a really positive contribution. Exciting! “

Harlow MP Robert Halfon commented: "I congratulate Razed Roof for achieving this wonderful Heritage Lottery grant. Razed Roof is one of the most incredible groups from in and around Harlow and I have been privileged to watch many of their activities on a number of occasions.

“I hope that this grant enables them to do even more good work as they are so vital to the community and I wish them every possible success. I would also like to thank the Heritage Lottery Fund for realising this group’s need for support."

Notes to editors

The masterplanner of Harlow New Town was architect and landscape architect Sir Frederick Gibberd who also designed a home and garden on the outskirts of the town where he lived for nearly 30 years. An HLF grant of £560,000 enabled the restoration of the garden which is now open to the public as a result.

Razed Roof is based at Harlow Playhouse and is made up of young adults with specific learning difficulties and disabilities and young people from mainstream education. The group provides theatre skills training and opportunities for performing publicly. Building social skills and confidence is an integral part of the work.

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 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK, including £305 million to more than 2,900 projects across the East of England.

Further information

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