Weald and Downland Museum secures £4million



Weald and Downland Museum market square with horse and cart

The Weald & Downland Open Air Museum at Singleton near Chichester is delighted to announce a £4million award from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), towards its Gateway Project.

The Gateway Project will transform the way in which visitors experience the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum from the moment that they enter the site. A new “Gateway” to the museum, which is located in the heart of the South Downs National Park, will be built around the museum’s millpond, providing facilities to meet the needs and expectations of its audiences. New orientation and interpretation galleries will transform visitors’ understanding of the site, the museum’s collections and the landscape from which its historic buildings originated. Alongside the Gateway’s new ticketing, retail and catering facilities, a highly flexible annexe will be created for use as a classroom and venue for community events and functions.

Richard Pailthorpe, Museum Director, said of the award: “This is terrific news and will help us to secure the future sustainability of the museum. Our Gateway Project has been over ten years in the planning and we are thrilled to have received this award. Without the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund it would have been impossible for the museum to have progressed with its ambitious scheme for improving our visitors’ experience of our unique collection.”

Paul Rigg, Chairman of the museum's trustees commented: "The funds are now in place for the museum to provide world class visitor facilities to match its unique heritage collection. It is a marvellous opportunity to broaden the museum's offer to the wider community and to improve the experience for our loyal supporters. We intend that the development period itself should be exciting for visitors."

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East, said: "The Weald and Downland Open Air Museum provides an important link to our rural heritage in the South East. Not only does it help us understand how past generations worked and lived, but it guarantees the future of some of the region's most historic buildings and the continuation of traditional skills and knowledge. Today's £4m grant will bring the museum's visitor offer into the 21st century, vastly improving access and facilities and transforming the way the buildings and collections are displayed and understood."

Building work will commence during 2015 and it is hoped that the new buildings will be available for the museum's visitors to enjoy and experience at the beginning of the 2017 season. In the meantime, the museum will be open for business as usual and will welcome visitors to engage with the new project. Two existing historic buildings – the Medieval Hall from Sole Street and the Wagon Shed from Pallingham Quay near Petworth – will be moved and re-erected at other locations on the museum site.

Notes to editors

About the Weald & Downland Outdoor Museum
Located in the heart of the South Downs National Park, the award-winning Weald & Downland Open Air Museum has 50 historic building exhibits and is designated by the Government for the outstanding importance of its collections. Exhibits include a medieval farmstead; a working watermill producing wholemeal stoneground flour; exhibitions focusing on traditional building techniques and agriculture; historic gardens, farm livestock and a working Tudor kitchen. The museum runs a well-established schools programme, plus an award-winning adult learning programme of courses in building conservation and rural crafts. There is a café that uses the Museum's own flour and a shop selling gifts and books on countryside and buildings themes. The modern Downland Gridshell building houses the museum's building conservation centre and artefact collection; there is a daily tour at 1.30pm when the museum is open and an appointments system for visits to the collections for research purposes.

Further information

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