Work begins on new home for the Registry of



Construction West Yorkshire Archive Building. Kirkgate, Wakefield is to begin in March

The £6.4million West Yorkshire Archive Building is to be built in Kirkgate, with construction by Leeds-based Bardsley Construction Yorkshire starting in March, and it will store over 10 million records over three floors.

The project is being jointly funded by the five West Yorkshire Councils, West Yorkshire Joint Services and Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) which has awarded a £3.9m grant to create a new permanent home for the region's archives.

Cllr Peter Box CBE, Leader of Wakefield Council, said: "I am very proud that work is due to begin thanks to the funding that has been secured through HLF, for this nationally-important collection of information. The records are part of our heritage and history."

Cllr Ros Lund, Chair – West Yorkshire Joint Services Committee, said: "It's great news that we will have an amazing new building in which to safeguard millions of records from the past, many of which are of regional, national and international importance."

Fiona Spiers, Head of HLF Yorkshire and the Humber said: "We're delighted to see this project get under way. The new West Yorkshire Archive Building is a vital resource designed to house the regions' archives to make them properly accessible for the first time. Soon, a treasure trove of history will be at the public's fingertips!"

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The extensive archive includes the collections of the old West Yorkshire and West Riding Councils, and the current Wakefield district council.

The collections also include all the court proceedings of the former county of the West Riding, which was the third largest and most populous county in England and a large collection of the National Coal Board's mining records.

Former miners are already helping to conserve, catalogue and care for the coal mining archives.

The files of the Stanley Royd Mental Health Hospital, where thousands of local men, women and children received treatment between 1841 and 1991, are also among the records to be stored at the new facility.

This collection has a pivotal role in the nation's history as it documents changes in the treatment of mental illness and its international significance has been recognised by UNESCO.

The iconic building design features a perforated metal mesh wrap, which will be back-lit in the evening to provide a dramatic changing façade. The archive storage areas on the upper floors are carefully controlled using state of the art equipment to ensure all the unique items remain in excellent condition for this and future generations.

A local history centre is also incorporated into the ground floor, which will offer a diverse programme of events, courses and opportunities for regional, local and family history engagement, and where groups can explore their heritage.

Adrian Rooney, regional director, Bardsley Construction Yorkshire, said: "This prestigious building will provide an iconic new home for the West Yorkshire Joint Services Archive and be a welcoming place for people to connect with and research fascinating local and family history contained in more than 10 million records."

The new building has been designed by architects Broadway Malyan and is due for completion in spring 2016.

Tim Brown, Director of Architecture in the practice's Manchester studio, said: "The start of construction is a major milestone in the development of this important scheme and our expert design team now looks forward to partnering with the client to deliver a home for the region's archives and a place where people can research the records for generations to come."

Further information

Wakefield Council Communications team, on tel: 01924 305 295, via email: pressoffice@wakefield.gov.uk, or via the Wakefield Council website.



Visual representation of proposed new West Yorkshire Archive

Rehousing the county's historic archives