Heritage Lottery Fund supports Manchester Jewish



Manchester Jewish Museum c1903

The project will result in a new museum extension that will house new galleries, learning and event spaces. The museum's historic synagogue building will also be fully restored.

Development funding of £426,900 has also been awarded to help the museum progress their plans to apply for a full grant of £2.8million at a later date.

The museum plans to create a new visitor experience, exploring themes in its collection, such as immigration, integration and identity. New galleries will tell the story of Manchester's Jewish community, including a dedicated gallery about the many Holocaust refugees and survivors that settled in Manchester. Volunteers will help catalogue and digitise the museum's collection in a new archive room and new spaces will be developed with local Cheetham Hill communities to explore and celebrate Manchester's diverse cultural heritage.

The museum is housed inside a former synagogue building – the oldest synagogue in Manchester. Built in 1874 by wealthy Jewish textile merchants, the museum now plans to fully restore the building's architectural splendour to create a stunning new visitor experience.

Commenting on the award, Museum Chief Executive Max Dunbar, said: “We’re delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us this support. Over the past 30 years we’ve welcomed thousands of visitors, educating them about Jewish faith, heritage and culture. With today’s announcement, we can now build on this to create a new 21st-century Jewish Museum, showcasing more of our collections, educating more people and working with more communities to ensure Manchester’s Jewish heritage is preserved for generations to come.”

Explaining the importance of the HLF support, Head of HLF North West Sara Hilton said: “With a collection of national significance and set in a city celebrated for its cultural diversity, the Manchester Jewish Museum is uniquely placed to bring to life the story of one of our country’s oldest communities for people from a huge range of backgrounds. Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players we’re delighted to offer our support to the next exciting chapter in the story of the Manchester Jewish Museum and we look forward to seeing the plans develop.”

Notes to editors

About Manchester Jewish Museum

Manchester Jewish Museum is housed inside a former Spanish and Portuguese synagogue – the only UK museum inside a synagogue. Founded in 1873 by Jewish textile merchants from the Mediterranean and the Middle East (Sephardi Jews), the building is Moorish in style and has over 40 exceptional stained glass windows. It is now a Grade II* listed building and has been described by English Heritage as 'one of the highlights of Victorian Gothic architecture in the country and one of the architectural jewels in the degraded local area'.

The museum is located on the edge of Manchester city centre, in lower Cheetham Hill, and is an exceptional survival in what is now Manchester’s historic Jewish Quarter. In 1911 over 30,000 Jewish people lived and worked in this area, but this community has since moved out and, as a result, all the other synagogues have been abandoned, demolished or converted for industrial use. The museum now runs regular guided walks around this historic Jewish Quarter.

The museum’s permanent gallery tells the story of Manchester’s Jewish community from 1740s to 1945. With Torah scrolls on permanent display, the building’s unique space is used to educate 15,000 visitors a year about Jewish faith, traditions and culture. The authenticity of the space is particularly important to teachers who bring 10,000 pupils a year to the museum. The building also plays an important social and communal role, bringing audiences of all faiths and backgrounds together through exhibitions, events and its award-winning learning programme. Further details are available on the Manchester Jewish Museum website.

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

Heritage Grants applications are assessed in two rounds. A first-round pass is given when HLF has endorsed outline proposals and earmarked funding. A first-round pass may also include an immediate award to fund the development of the project. Detailed proposals are then considered by HLF at second-round and as long as plans have progressed satisfactorily and according to the original proposal, an award for the project is confirmed.

Further information

For further information, images and interviews please contact Max Dunbar at Manchester Jewish Museum on 0161 834 9879 and ceo@manchesterjewishmuseum.com.