Memories of Whitehaven YMCA will be captured



Members of the project team

With funding from Whitehaven Townscape Heritage Initiative, itself awarded £659,000 from HLF, the YMCA building on Irish Street is currently being redeveloped by Impact Housing Association and Howgill into a foyer-style community hub for young people. A great deal of work has already taken place looking at the historical importance of the building, preserving the original architecture and combining this with modern building techniques to ensure its viability for the future. This project will complement and enhance this work by looking at the memories that local people have of the YMCA.

From initial research it became apparent that many people in the local area have fantastic recollections of activities in the old YMCA, ranging from roller discos to sporting activities and much more besides. Life and Leisure for Young People is an intergenerational project that will see young people working with their elders to gain an insight into the recent past and looking at ways this can help shape the future. Young people will learn oral history techniques, capture memories and work towards an event/exhibition that will coincide with the opening of the foyer in November 2015.

“This is a really exciting step forward for us” explained Janice Murray, Howgill Arts Senior Practitioner. “As artists at Howgill Family Centre, we are used to working with young people using visual language, but this project will see us combining oral history and visual arts techniques. I know there are lots of people out there with some great memories of the YMCA and we would love to hear from them. We really want young people to hear these stories and learn from

them. We hope to preserve these memories so they are given as much importance as the preservation of the fabric of the building."

Sara Hilton, Head of HLF North West, said: "We're pleased to support this project which will cast a truly personal perspective on the fantastic work already going on to preserve and transform Whitehaven's Old Town, including the YMCA building, which is also thanks to money raised by National Lottery players. This project will enable the memories and lives of those who passed through its doors to be heard and celebrated."

Notes to editors

About Howgill Family Centre

Howgill Family Centre has been in existence since 1977 and provides holistic services for families, children and young people in Copeland. Howgill is unique in having a dedicated Arts Team (Janice Murray and Helen Morgan) whose role is to inspire and engage those using the centre through artistic endeavour.

Further information

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