Historic Gunpowder Mills secures National Lottery



The Royal Gunpowder Mills site

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has today announced funding to the historic and nationally important Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills (WARGM) for the project. An initial £83,000 has been awarded to help develop plans with a further £4.9million promised, subject to a further application.

The grant, from HLF's Heritage Enterprise programme, will be the catalyst for significant redevelopment of part of the site and will help ensure a viable and sustainable future for the wider site and its visitor attraction.

The money will be used to repair the listed buildings, which were built between 1861 and 1889 but are currently in danger of deteriorating beyond recovery. The proposals involve restoring the shell of each building and reinstating utilities which were previously removed. Subsequent fit out of the buildings will be completed by PGL Travel Limited (PGL), WARGM's commercial partner in this exciting project. The buildings will become part of a new outdoor activity centre hosting accommodation and classrooms.

Mark Pemberton, Chair of the WARGM Charitable Foundation, says: "The Heritage Lottery Fund receives many high quality applications from around the country and we are delighted that our bid has been successful. The opportunity to restore the unused and listed Buildings for use by PGL, helps deliver our aim to secure a sustainable future for the site and the visitor attraction. The HLF grant will trigger over £20million of investment into WARGM, create up to 200 jobs

and will deliver a regular income stream for the trust to enable more of the 180 acres to be maintained."

HLF's Heritage Enterprise programme addresses 'market failure' – where buildings have previously failed to attract investment or realise their commercial potential because the cost of repairs has meant that they were not commercially viable. This Lottery investment is now bridging that financial gap, enabling vital repair and conservation works to transform some of the buildings at the Royal Gunpowder Mills and making a commercial partnership a viable proposition.

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of HLF East of England, said: "Distinctive and highly adaptable, investing in historic industrial buildings like Waltham Abbey's Royal Gunpowder Mills, has been proven to deliver economic benefits for both business and local communities. This vital National Lottery investment is helping to unlock that potential, delivering a sustainable future for the Mills site by triggering a further £20milion of investment that will create over 200 jobs."

The Royal Gunpowder Mills hosted the manufacture of explosives from the 16th to the 20th century, finally closing in 1991. It has been described as the 'most important site for the history of explosives in Europe' by Historic England and this new development will sit alongside and help sustain the existing museum, nature reserve and train tours.

Andrew Coates, Royal Gunpowder Mills Chief Executive added: "This development will change the visitor attraction dynamics but will make it more sustainable and secure jobs and the site for the future. The attraction will of course remain at the heart of the project and continue to open the exhibitions and also be able to offer a full programme of talks, workshops and education facilities to ensure that the story of this historic site can be told to future generations. Its great news for Waltham Abbey, it enables the heritage to be saved and also bring much needed jobs and investment into the area.

Notes to editors

Royal Gunpowder Mills contains over twenty listed buildings and extensive areas of the site are designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM), Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and an important Conservation Area. The Royal Gunpowder Mills extends to over 73 hectares (180 acres) and it forms a key part of the Lea Valley Regional Park. See the Royal Gunpowder Mills website for more details.

Further information

Royal Gunpowder Mills: Email: Andrew.Coates@royalgunpowdermills.com.