Mark the Battle of the Somme centenary with



British troops preparing for the Somme Offensive in 1916

From the heavy losses and injuries suffered by the Pals battalions and soldiers drafted from across the British Empire to the dramatic increase in manufacturing at home to supply the Front, the Battle touched the lives of nearly every community across the UK and beyond.

It is important that we remember and understand the impact of this and other aspects of the First World War one hundred years on. So, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is encouraging groups across the country to apply for funding so they can explore some of the many ways in which it impacted their communities.

The money is available through HLF's community grants programme First World War: then and now. £4million is available in 2015/16 as grants of between £3,000 and £10,000.

Sir Peter Luff, Chair of HLF, said: "The demand for National Lottery funding for First World War projects has been phenomenal, so much so we've decided to make extra money available. This will mean everyone, in particular more young people, can explore the momentous events of a war that shaped our nation, Europe and the world. Next year marks the centenary of the Battle of the Somme and if groups want support for projects in 2016, they need to start thinking about applying now."

Thanks to National Lottery funding, thousands of young people and communities throughout the UK have already been involved in activities marking the Centenary such as: researching and recording local heritage; conserving and finding out more about war memorials; and using digital technology to share the fascinating stories they uncover. This new money will help even more people get involved to explore a greater range of stories including those surrounding the Battle of the Somme.

Related projects

The breadth and scale of First World War stories being explored and shared across the country so far has been remarkable. HLF has already funded some incredibly inspiring regional stories in

- East of England
- East Midlands
- London
- North East
- South East
- South West
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and The Humber

These include:

East of England

- Commemoration of World War One in Mill Road Cemetery Cambridge. This two-year project is focussed on graves relating to the First World War.
- 'Now the Last Poppy has Fallen - Essex during WWI.' Volunteers are carrying out research into local stories from the First World War with links to objects, documents and collections.
- Young people explore the lesser known life and legacy of Edith Cavell who is remembered because of her execution at the hands of the Germans during the First World War. This Norwich-based young people's project, is designed and led by a team of undergraduates from the University of East Anglia.

East Midlands

- £10,000 to research the lives of the Lincoln women who built the tanks which first their first appearance in the Battle of the Somme
- £9,700 to discover how the War affected the Derbyshire town of Glossop through the story of the local football team.
- £9,700 to Sight Support Derbyshire to tell the unexplored story of how soldiers readjusted to living with visual impairments after the War.

London

- Local people from Tottenham and Walthamstow in London exploring their family history to see if any of their relatives fought in the War.

- Supporting Bow Church in East London to restore two memorial plaques, a wooden memorial and a battlefield cross in Bow Church's chapel. Our funding also enabled research into the lives of those whose names appear on the memorials.
- Supporting Southwark Council with a project focussing on the contribution of black people to the First World War, reflecting the fact at almost one-in-four of the borough's present population are of African or Caribbean descent.

North East

- £10,000 for the Centenary Song project which sees Parkhead Community Primary School, with the help of Beamish Museum and the residents of a local care home, explore the experience of war through popular songs of the era, such as 'Keep the Home Fires Burning' and Pack Up Your Troubles'.
- £9,900 for 'Wor Women on the Home Front', a project led by Tyneside Women's Health revealing the incredible contributions women made during the conflict.
- £7,000 for the Universities at War project, commemorating and chronicling the lives of those from Durham and Newcastle Universities who fell during the First World War.

South East

- The Museum of Oxford's project uncovering the 'Lost voices of Oxford's Great War.' Working with the Underconstruction Theatre Company, the museum collected untold stories and previously unseen artefacts from the conflict and made them available to the public through a range of creative and educational activities including a drama production.
- A Surrey-wide investigation into all aspects of the impact of the First World War on the people of the county. Local people of all ages and backgrounds are involved in bringing together a wealth of information for the project that covers the full five years of the conflict's commemoration.
- A community-led project into the lives of almost 1000 local men from just 21 streets in the Buckland area of Portsmouth who names are listed on local war memorials. Most of those listed served in the Royal Navy.

South West

- £9,800 awarded to the Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre, Somerset, for their 'War and Peace: commemorating the Centenary through dance' project which focussed on the real-life experiences of Somerset women and Kathleen Tacchi-Morris during the First World War.
- £6,000 to Tiverton Museum, Devon, for an exhibition showcasing the contribution that the Heathcoat Factory made to the war effort during the First World War. The factory was heavily involved in the war effort from 1915, producing shell cases and net for very early respirators after the first gas attacks on the Western Front.
- £6,700 for the 'Shaftesbury and the Great War' project which created a permanent display to commemorate the people of Shaftesbury in Dorset's' role in and memories of the conflict.

West Midlands

- Telling the story of Coventry's 'munitionettes', the women who worked in the city's munitions factories and spent what leisure time they had organising a women's only football league.
- Uncovering the stories of the hundreds of thousands of Muslims who served in the British Army and fought in the First World War. The project – 'We Also Served' - is being undertaken by a Birmingham-based organisation.

- Supporting the Newcastle-under-Lyme Museum and Art Gallery project ‘Newcastle Remembers’ which mounted an exhibition of documents, newspaper reports, photographs and artefacts gathered by local volunteers and staff.

Yorkshire and The Humber

- Providing a grant to conserve and tell the story of the mighty River Don steam engine at Kelham Island Museum, Sheffield, that rolled the armour plate for the Dreadnought warships that fought in the Battle of Jutland in 1916.
- Revealing the terror of total war and its impact on life around the world which is the focus of 1914: When the World Changed Forever, a major exhibition on the First World War at York Castle Museum.
- Giving local people in Craven the chance to trace their First World War relatives is just part of a two-year project looking at how the conflict affected the district and its inhabitants and featuring a range of events and exhibitions.

Notes to editors

HLF has invested more than £70million to over 1,300 projects across the UK marking the Centenary of the First World War. This funding has reached almost 80 per cent of parliamentary constituencies and almost 90 per cent of local authorities.

HLF’s First World War: then and now programme is providing grants between £3,000 and £10,000 to local communities looking to explore and understand their First World War heritage. Larger grants for First World War projects are also available through HLF’s open programmes. More information is available in our Understanding the First World War feature.

Battle of the Somme Centenary

Plans to make an additional £4million available through First World War: then and now was announced on 1 July by the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, John Whittingdale, as he unveiled the Government’s plans for the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme in 2016.

The Battle of the Somme, also known as the Somme Offensive, was a battle of the First World War fought by the armies of the British and French empires against the German Empire. It took place between 1 July and 18 November 1916 on both sides of the River Somme in France. It was one of the largest battles of the First World War, in which more than 1,000,000 men were wounded or killed.

Further information

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Women’s’ Work: Sharing the stories of the factory women – Women and Theatre

New National Lottery investment in First World War Centenary