Lews Castle transformation thanks to National



Lews Castle and Museum

One of Scotland's most remarkable castles has reopened to the public to begin a new life as a museum celebrating the heritage of the Outer Hebrides.

Derelict for many years, Lews Castle has now been restored to its Victorian splendours and once again stands proudly above the town of Stornoway – gateway to the Western Isles.

The ambitious project, funded by a £4.6million grant from HLF, has seen the exterior and ground floor of the castle returned to their former glory and an award-winning new extension created to house a state-of-the-art museum sharing the stories of life on the islands. Telling the history of the Outer Hebrides from pre-history to the present day, the museum's first language will be Gaelic with full supporting English interpretation.

The creation of the museum will see the return to the island of six of the internationally renowned Lewis Chessmen, on loan from the British Museum, as well as items from the National Museum Scotland and National Archives of Scotland.

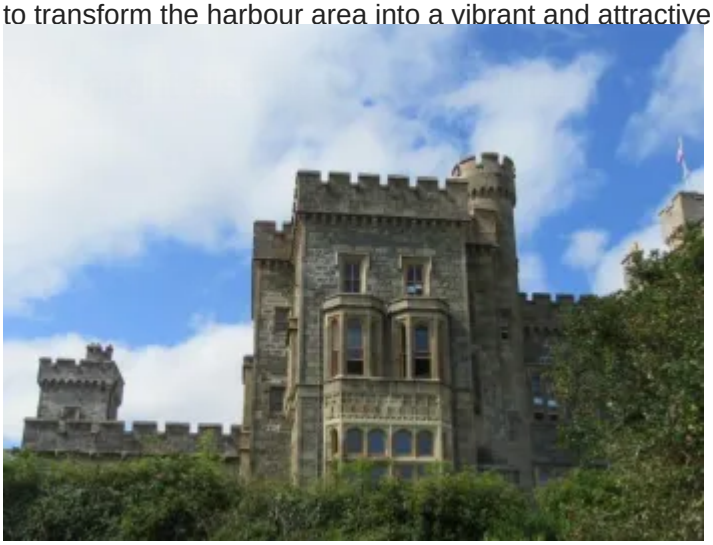
Over 20 community heritage societies (Comainn Eachdraidh) from across the islands have come together to help interpret the way the story of the Outer Hebrides – the lifestyle, traditions, culture and language - is celebrated and shared.[quote=Lucy Casot, Head of HLF Scotland]"Thanks to National Lottery players, Lews Castle is now set to become a major tourist destination regenerating the local economy through a boost in visitor numbers."[/quote]

“Thanks to National Lottery players, Lews Castle is now set to become a major tourist destination regenerating the local economy through a boost in visitor numbers,” said Lucy Casot, Head of HLF Scotland.

“It will also provide a base for the cultural heritage not only of Lewis but of all the islands across the Outer Hebrides, celebrating and sharing the history and stories of this amazing part of the world.”

New jobs have also been created in the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Heritage Service and through the opening of a new shop and café. Experts in traditional building were also used in the restoration project.

The opening of Lews Castle and museum builds on earlier National Lottery investment in Stornoway. The £1.25m Townscape Heritage project completed in 2004 restored a number of historic buildings, including the town hall, helping to transform the harbour area into a vibrant and attractive place to live, work and visit.



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