

September 23, 2014

Boost for Wisbech High Street's Lottery bid

An application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for nearly £2 million for the Wisbech High Street Project was submitted at the end of August, Fenland District Council announced this week.

The council also confirmed that Cambridgeshire County Council had resolved unanimously to increase their investment in the project to £200,000. This takes the total for local contributions to the project up to £480,000: Fenland District Council has pledged £230,000, the Wisbech Society £25,000 and Wisbech Town Council £25,000.

The HLF will now spend the next few months reviewing the stage one application in detail before its Board makes a final decision in January 2015. If the initial application is successful, there will be another period dedicated to developing a second stage application, which could be submitted to the HLF for final consideration in around January 2016.

Gary Garford, Corporate Director at Fenland District Council, said: "We are delighted to have had such great support from local groups and both the County and Town Councils and hope that will help to make a stronger case to the HLF for their investment.

"We would like to thank the local community for their vital contributions to the application, whether that has been via the pro-active consultative group which has met every month over 2014, the wonderful and creative students at the Thomas Clarkson Academy or the general public for attending and giving their views at consultation events.

"We will provide an update on progress in the New Year when we have heard the outcome of the stage one application."

The HLF funding, linked to contributions from building owners, is being sought to undertake structural and external repairs to buildings, bring vacant units back in to use and repair architectural detail.

Alongside the physical work, the HLF requires the funding to be used to engage the community in the project, by means of a series of projects and programmes.

Together they make up an Activity Plan that has been designed in partnership with a range of community groups and includes opportunities for local people and businesses to get involved in heritage through education, training and leisure activities.

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Proposed projects include:

- Formal post-16 / adult training in conservation construction at the College of West Anglia with “taster” / feeder modules at Thomas Clarkson Academy, with practical restoration projects
- Accredited building maintenance courses for owners, stewards, occupiers
- Community archaeology events
- Interior and shop front design work experience with students from the Thomas Clarkson Academy
- The involvement of NEETs (young people not in employment, education or training) in the restoration work
- Expanding and capitalising on the national Heritage Open Days programme

— ENDS —

Background Notes to editors:

Wisbech is known as the Capital of the Fens and is arguably the finest Georgian market town and port in the East of England. The town centre contains a large conservation area containing many Listed buildings and areas of historic importance including the Crescent and North and South Brink.

However due to a combination of underlying economic and social factors, the built environment in Wisbech has suffered and exhibits significant heritage and market failure. Many buildings in the town centre are at risk or vulnerable and some buildings have already suffered fatal collapse.

It is with this background that Fenland District Council, its partners and the community submitted a funding application for the Heritage Lottery Fund Townscape Heritage programme in August 2014.

Project area

The area proposed to form the Townscape Heritage project is Wisbech High Street. The High Street consists of approximately 30 properties and an area of public realm and is located within the Conservation Area.

The High Street is one of the most important spaces in Wisbech town centre linking the Brink and Thomas Clarkson Memorial with The Crescent and the Market Place.

By focussing on physical improvements to the High Street and a comprehensive range of educational activities the proposed Townscape Heritage project seeks to address the long-term cycle of decline by delivering:

- High quality physical improvements to a prominent part of the town centre including the introduction of new commercial, community and residential uses
- A comprehensive range of formal and informal heritage learning and engagement opportunities
- A renewed sense of ownership and pride in local people for their town.

For more information please contact Fenland District Council press office on: 01354 622226

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