

Community News - Special Issue 34

an information service from PACDG - the Presteigne Area Community Development Group

THE JUDGE'S LODGING OPENS ITS DOORS WITH HERITAGE LOTTERY FUNDING THIS YEAR

Since the doors to Radnorshire's Shire Hall re-opened in 1997, the Judge's Lodging has been a unique, award-winning attraction within Powys, run by a charitable organisation, the Judge's Lodging Trust. The building, currently owned by Powys County Council, is Grade II* listed and consists of the original period courthouse and cells, together with accommodation for the visiting High Court judge who would have stayed during the local Assizes. The Judge's Lodging houses a wonderful collection of objects that represents the history of the Judiciary in the 19th Century. Unlike some museums there is a genuine hands-on approach to the collection which is regularly described as 'immersive'.

Following a review of capital and revenue investment in 2015 by Powys County Council, the museum began the process of transition to full independence. Although this will bring many challenges, the Trustees are committed to creating a sustainable future for the Judge's Lodging and to creating the best opportunities to conserve the building and its collection.

To this end, late in 2016, the Trust made a successful application for £86,800 to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Resilient Heritage grant programme, the first grant award made in Wales under this programme. The grant will allow a more strategic approach through development of staff and volunteers, understanding the audience (visitor research) and building a business plan that allows the Trust to confidently manage the museum and sustainably undertake the required capital investment, with partners, to conserve the building.

Ashley Charlwood, Chair of Trustees, said, "The Trust is so grateful for the support from HLF; it allows us to consider the best opportunities for the continued development of The Judge's Lodging into a fully independent museum".

Powys County Council have recently expressed their desire to transfer the Shire Hall to the Trust through a Community Asset Transfer. Mr Charlwood went on to say, "HLF supporting the strategic development of the charity and revenue for the Museum is only part of the picture. We need to be confident that we can, with partners, meet the expected £200k costs to carry out much needed maintenance on the fabric of the building. Without HLF funding at this time, the outlook for the building and museum would be very different".

Gaby Rivers, the Development Manager said, "In 2015 we were reducing the hours for paid staff, and after 19 years as museum curator, I was made redundant from Powys County Council. Now thanks to HLF the Trust can establish two new posts, a museum assistant and a volunteer co-ordinator, to help support our wonderful volunteers". The Trust receives over 1,000 hours of volunteer time every year, and could not continue without this input.

Ms Rivers continued, "This year is quite special for us all, as it is 20 years since actor Robert Hardy opened our doors to the public! We are so grateful for the support from HLF, and it allows us to continue confidently conserving this wonderful building and start much needed fundraising".

Richard Bellamy, Head of the HLF in Wales added "We know that there is an appetite from heritage organisations to adapt and grow in order to build a firm financial footing. Resilient Heritage brings together all that we have learnt from over 21 years of grant-making, providing a tailored package of support that responds to the individual needs of heritage organisations so they can not only survive in these challenging financial times, but thrive."

The Museum opens for the season on St David's Day, 1st March, and further details of the opening times can be found at www.judgeslodging.org.uk. For further information please contact Gaby Rivers on 01544 260650, or email info@judgeslodging.org.uk

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. See www.hlf.org.uk. Follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and use #HLFsupported.

If you have any questions on what's happening - or not happening - in our community, do let us know and we'll do our best to provide an answer, or at least point you in the right direction - simply email pacdg@icloud.com - or collar one of the Steering Committee in the street and tell us what's on your mind. You can also leave a written message at the Library for us - remember to include your name and a contact telephone number !

We're happy to help publicise community and charity activities and events (but only for events in the immediate Presteigne area) - email pacdg@icloud.com

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