Northwich's history fit for the future

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Historic buildings in Witton Street which form part of the TH scheme

The town has been earmarked for a grant under the Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) Townscape Heritage Initiative fund, it was announced today.

A steering group led by the Weaver Valley Partnership and Cheshire West and Chester Council bid for a share of the funding pot which aims to regenerate the historic environment in towns and cities across the UK.

The Northwich bid focused on funding improvements to the traditional timber-framed buildings in Witton Street and High Street.

Other funding streams triggered by the grant are expected to result in a total of £1.4m being targeted at improving properties and boosting the general appearance of the town centre conservation area.

The steering group - which also comprises retailers, residents and local Councillors - has now been invited to submit a detailed outline of its plans to secure the grant.

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West England, said: "Northwich's half-timbered buildings are the very essence of the town centre's distinctive character. By awarding our initial

support and some immediate development funding, plans to reinvigorate the area can begin in earnest, underpinning this important local heritage while at the same time providing a welcome boost to the local economy."

Councillor Stuart Parker, Executive Member for Culture and Economy, said: "This is fantastic news and a clear endorsement from the HLF that our proposals have the potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money.

"The steering group will now develop the plans with a clear focus on enhancing the fabric of our most historic buildings and preserving them for future generations.

"This project will complement the award-winning public realm improvements which are re-introducing a traditional feel to Witton Street through quality materials such as York stone.

"Crucially, it underlines that the regeneration of Northwich involves the whole of the town centre - not just schemes like Barons Quay."

David Watson, Chairman of the Weaver Valley Partnership, said: "This will bring funding for independent retailers to further enhance the improvements to Witton Street and High Street."

Local Councillor Paul Dolan said: "Our historic timber-framed buildings are what give the town centre its unique character and identity and I am delighted that the HLF has signalled its intention to invest in their future.

"This project has great potential to boost the offer of our traditional shopping areas as the town looks ahead to the exciting redevelopment of Barons Quay.

"It is crucial that we maintain a focus on ensuring existing businesses are properly supported and I welcome the aims of this project in doing that."

Notes to Editors

- An HLF Townscape Heritage (TH) first-round pass means that money has been set aside by HLF. The applicants can then progress to the second round and send a detailed second-round submission to secure the full award. This early level of strong financial commitment means that THs can build strong partnerships with the assurance that funding for their scheme is in place provided their final proposals fully meet the programme criteria.
- THs encourage partnerships of local organisations to carry out repairs and other works to a number of historic buildings, structures or spaces. Grants are available from £100,000 up to £2m. The next application deadline is 31 August 2014 with decisions being made in January 2015.
- To date, HLF has invested over £229m regenerating towns that have suffered serious social and economic decline.

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