

## Cumbria LEP backs major arts project for Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund

AN ambitious multi-venue arts project in the Lake District has won support from the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership in its bid to secure a share of a new £15m Government fund aimed at showcasing the north of England.

The £3.29 million World Heritage Lake District proposal will now go forward as the Cumbria LEP submission to the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund, where it will face competition from other schemes across the region.

Bid leaders Lakeland Arts and the Wordsworth Trust have proposed a package of transformative capital investment encompassing high quality cultural and heritage assets at the Windermere Jetty, Dove Cottage and the Wordsworth Museum, Grasmere, and Kendal's Abbot Hall Art Gallery and Museum.

- **Windermere Jetty** will create a new, accessible and sustainable museum on Windermere's shores, including the creation of a high quality permanent exhibition; a temporary exhibition space to house creative responses to the collection; a Project Space for artist commissions, residencies and community projects in the Old Fire Station in the grounds; an outdoor Learning and Play area; and landscaping across the grounds to ensure access to the iconic surrounding landscapes.
- **Reimagining Wordsworth** will transform the visitor experience of the historic Wordsworth Museum, which holds the largest collection of Wordsworth's letters and manuscripts anywhere in the world. It will create a new gallery increasing space for exhibitions; a Learning Centre; new outdoor spaces to connect the visitor experience to the landscape; a Community Gallery for local artists, community groups and young people to showcase their work; and achieve full accessibility across the site.
- **Abbot Hall** is home to one of the region's most significant visual arts collections and a dynamic programme of exhibitions of Modern and Contemporary arts set against major historical pieces. The Museum will undergo vital refurbishment across its Main Galleries; found a new Project Space for artist residencies, exhibitions, community projects and workshops; and achieve full accessibility across the buildings and site.

Towns and cities across Northern England had been invited to bid for a share of the fund, which Government hopes will build on the impact of next year's Great Exhibition of the North in Newcastle and Gateshead.

Cumbria LEP Director Graham Haywood said: "We assessed several submissions from within the county before deciding that the World Heritage Lake District project had the potential to make a significant impact in terms of arts, culture and attracting visitors to Cumbria.

"Delivering the WHLD programme of major capital investment will secure a series of important collections that are emblematic of the Lake District's World Heritage status and identity – and central to the artistic, creative and industrial history of the North of England.

"For those reasons, the assessment panel believed that the bid could stand up against proposals from the 10 other LEPs across the north and agreed that Cumbria LEP should assist organisers in developing the full business case that has today been submitted to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport."

Government intends that successful bids, which will be announced in March 2018, will encourage sustainable cultural and creative regeneration in the North of England and benefit areas that have historically had low levels of cultural and creative investment.

The Cumbria LEP area is allowed to make one bid for a single capital project, with funding sought not to exceed a £4 million threshold.

In a joint statement, Gordon Watson, Chief Executive of Lakeland Arts, and Michael McGregor, The Robert Woof Director of the Wordsworth Trust, said: "We are delighted to have the full support of Cumbria LEP for World Heritage Lake District and this application to the Norther Cultural Regeneration Fund.

"The transformational project celebrates Cumbria as an internationally significant cultural landscape, and builds on the announcement of the English Lake District as the UK's newest UNESCO World Heritage Site in July 2017.

"The project will bring significant benefits to Cumbria's communities and boost cultural tourism. It will create a step-change in the quality and impact of culture in the region and we are excited about how the capital developments in the project will greatly increase learning and engagement opportunities and participation in cultural activities, as well as developing skills and creating new permanent jobs."

**ENDS**

#### **Notes for editors**

- Cumbria LEP provides a strategic lead for all activities contributing to the growth and vibrancy of the county's economy and where appropriate takes positive action, using the skills, capability and networks of LEP partners.
- The LEP is keen to work with all partners and stakeholders (private and public) to undertake actions, secure funding and implement initiatives to support sustainability and growth of Cumbria's economy.
- A copy of the Cumbria Strategic Economic Plan is available at: [www.cumbrialep.co.uk/what-we-do/sep/](http://www.cumbrialep.co.uk/what-we-do/sep/)
- The Great Exhibition of the North runs from June 22 to the weekend of September 8/9, 2018. The free exhibition is expected to be the biggest event in England next year with organisers promising "amazing exhibits, inspired technology, vibrant street performance, cutting edge culture and magical experiences". For full details, go to <https://getnorth2018.com/>