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Luton gets new funding to help bring disused historic buildings back to life

12 social enterprises and charities across the UK are being empowered to take over and transform at-risk high street buildings

Luton is to benefit from a share of a new £5 million fund empowering communities to breathe new life into their disused and at-risk historic buildings.

The grant will help the Culture Trust, Luton develop more dilapidated buildings in the Hat District and create a valuable range of new spaces for creative and community uses. Specifically, this funding will enable the re-animation of the Streetscape in Luton's Hat District in partnership with the Community, owners, partners, neighbours, artists and the creative Industries. Collectively and collaboratively, the Trust shall continue to strategically transform key heritage buildings in the Hat District.

The funding is being awarded as part of a new partnership between the **National Lottery Heritage Fund** and charity the **Architectural Heritage Fund**, to expand the Architectural Heritage Fund's Heritage Development Trust model across the UK. It follows the success of a pilot programme which supported seven social enterprises and charities in England to repair, restore and reuse at-risk high street and town centre buildings in their local areas.

As one of 12 new Heritage Development Trusts, The Culture Trust, Luton will receive a package of funding to help it scale up its operations to acquire and redevelop a pipeline of local historic buildings. It can also apply for grants to support early project development, and will be given guidance from consultants and mentors to develop its skills and knowledge alongside peer-to-peer support to expand their reach and influence.

Marie Kirbyshaw, Chief Executive of the Culture Trust, Luton said: "This is Luton's time to celebrate past and present cultures through transforming our Town Centre. We are thrilled to play our part in regenerating Luton's former hat and industrial heritage buildings for cultural purposes. We are thankful to AHF and the Heritage Fund for seeing Luton's Hat District potential and including us in this prestigious Heritage Development Trust national programme. We look forward to the next three years of partnership working, learning and achieving long-lasting results in Luton".

Robin Porter, Chief Executive of Luton Borough Council said: 'Another good news story for Luton as we transform our town centre. The Hat District is a key programme in our 2040 plans and we will continue to partner with the Culture Trust in caring for and re-using our Heritage Assets'.

Arts & Heritage Minister Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay said: "Through its Heritage Development Trusts, the Architectural Heritage Fund has helped to breathe new life into old buildings across England, creating new jobs, homes, and opportunities. I am delighted that this new partnership with the National Lottery Heritage Fund will take the

scheme nationwide, making a difference to people and communities across the UK. I look forward to seeing how these 12 new projects develop and the difference they make to people's lives – now and long into the future."

Matthew Mckeague, Chief Executive of the Architectural Heritage Fund, said: "Heritage has a lot to offer the future of the UK's places and people. Bringing old buildings back into productive use will protect our country's rich architectural past while creating important new homes, workplaces and community and cultural venues. We've already seen the many benefits this work can bring to communities across the country, including through the success of our first Heritage Development Trusts across England. Our partnership with the National Lottery Heritage Fund is an important commitment to continuing this work in 12 more areas of the UK by giving more people the funding they need to work together to save and restore their most historic and at-risk local buildings. We're very grateful to the Heritage Fund for this partnership, and to National Lottery players for making it possible."

Eilish McGuinness, Chief Executive of The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "As the UK's largest funder of heritage, we collaborate with organisations which share our vision for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future. I am delighted that our £5 million grant funding is supporting the expansion of the Heritage Development Trust programme across the UK – stretching from Medway to Glasgow. This partnership with the Architectural Heritage Fund is supporting communities, charities and heritage groups in 12 towns and cities, to develop plans for the transformation of at-risk historic buildings – boosting pride in place, connection to the past and investing in the future. Over the next 10 years, we aim to invest £3.6 billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players, and this programme is one of the ways we can support projects of all sizes across the UK to make a decisive difference for people, places and communities."

Organisations which have already benefited from Heritage Development Trust funding include not-for-profit [Valley Heritage in Bacup](#), Lancashire which last year restored an empty Victorian bank building into a new co-working space and housing for homeless young people. Meanwhile, in Sunderland, [Tyne & Wear Building Preservation Trust](#) has transformed a row of Georgian merchants' houses once threatened with demolition into a vibrant music venue, coffee shop and bar.

Research by Historic England has found almost half of retail buildings in England and Wales, one third of offices and almost one in five industrial buildings are more than 100 years old. As many as 6,000 shops have become vacant in the last five years according to [the BRC's Local Data Company vacancy monitor from this summer](#).

The 12 organisations receiving the new funding as part of the Heritage Development Trust programme are:

- [Culture Trust Luton](#) in Luton, Bedfordshire
- [Glasgow Building Preservation Trust](#) in Glasgow
- [Haverfordwest Heritage Ltd](#) in Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire
- [Heeley Trust](#) in Heeley and Meersbrook, Sheffield
- [Fife Historic Buildings Trust](#), working in Dunfermline, Fife
- [Galeri Caernarfon Cyf](#) in Caernarfon, Gwynedd
- [Inner City Trust](#) in Derry/Londonderry
- [Leicester City Council](#) in Leicester.
- [Medway Council](#), working in Chatham and Rochester, Medway
- [North East Scotland Preservation Trust](#) in Portsoy, Aberdeenshire
- [Redruth Revival CIC](#) in Redruth, Cornwall
- [Re-form Heritage](#) in Stoke-on-Trent

About the Architectural Heritage Fund

[The Architectural Heritage Fund](#) is a registered charity, working since 1976 to promote the conservation and sustainable re-use of historic buildings for the benefit of communities across the UK, particularly in economically disadvantaged areas.

The Architectural Heritage Fund exists to help communities find enterprising ways to revitalise the old buildings they love. We help them with advice, grants and loans. Our support acts as a catalyst for putting sustainable heritage at the heart of vibrant local economies. For over 40 years, we've been the leading social investor in creating new futures for historic buildings.

About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

As the largest dedicated funder of the UK's heritage, The National Lottery Heritage Fund's vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future as set out in our strategic plan, [Heritage 2033](#).

Over the next ten years, we aim to invest £3.6 billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players to bring about benefits for people, places and the natural environment.

We help protect, transform and share the things from the past that people care about, from popular museums and historic places, our natural environment and fragile species, to the languages and cultural traditions that celebrate who we are. We are passionate about heritage and committed to driving innovation and collaboration to make a positive difference to people's lives today, while leaving a lasting legacy for future generations to enjoy.

Follow @HeritageFundUK on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #NationalLotteryHeritageFund #Heritage2033

About The Culture Trust, Luton

Established in 2008, the Culture Trust, Luton is a vibrant and progressive independent charity and our mission is **'to connect communities through culture'**. We do this through our accredited museums, theatres, galleries, creative workspaces and Arts Centre in Luton. We attract over 200,000 visits per annum to our sites: The Hat Factory Arts Centre, Hat House and Hat Works creative workspace, Wardown House Museum & Gallery and Stockwood Discovery Centre Gardens & Museum. We present multi-cultural and year-round programme of events, exhibitions, workshops and performances. We support creative talent and skills by providing opportunities, platforms and cultural career progression for over 15,000 young people. We care for a collection of over 90,000 museum objects, 1.5 million photographs and maps, the most extensive and complete hat and headwear collection in the UK and the best collection of Ian Hamilton-Finlay sculptures in England. We own and care for listed heritage sites, buildings and gardens and we are committed to the adaptive re-use of heritage for cultural purposes and community use. As a charity, we are able to use our valuable core funding from Luton Rising and Arts Council England to lever additional funding into cultural activity in Luton, heritage care and conservation and in celebrating our diverse communities through culture. For more information about the Culture Trust, Luton visit www.culturetrust.com

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