

WHAM! The Village Alive Trust's latest project wins support from the Heritage Lottery Fund

LOCAL buildings preservation charity, The Village Alive Trust, has been awarded £78,400 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for its WHAM! Project based at White Castle Vineyard, which deals with wine and heritage in Monmouthshire.

Led by Trust volunteers from the local community and vineyard partners Robb and Nicola Merchant, the Wine and Heritage Alive in Monmouthshire (WHAM!) project will restore the grade II* Croft Barn which is currently on the listed buildings 'at risk' register, and make use of the building as a learning centre for wine growing skills and heritage activities.

A programme of learning activities and hands-on experience of viticulture skills will begin later this year, when conservation work and installation of facilities in the barn is completed. Schoolchildren, teachers and groups such as WIs, YFCs, wine growers and local history societies will be encouraged to take part in a programme of learning activities at the barn over the next few years. There are volunteering opportunities for anyone interested in the project and more information can be obtained by emailing village.alive@btinternet.com

The Croft Barn is a rare example of its type in South East Wales as it was originally a thatched, cruck-trussed building with box frame walls infilled with wattle panels. Over the centuries it has gained a slated roof and gable end walls of local stone but the oak roof trusses and some original wooden panels remain.

The Village Alive Trust was formed 11 years ago and through grant-aid and partnership projects has conserved a variety of local listed buildings which were deemed at risk. Cadw is supporting the Croft Barn restoration and the Trust has already funded emergency work.

Commenting on the HLF grant, Trust chairman, Pat Griffiths said: "We are delighted to have received the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund to save this unique barn and look forward to welcoming visitors who can learn new skills within its ancient walls".

Monmouth MP David Davies said: "I have had the pleasure of supporting the work of the Village Alive Trust since its inauguration 10 years ago. I attended the official opening of the Trust's first restoration project in 2005 and I have watched this fantastic charity go from strength to strength ever since.

"I am therefore delighted to lend my full backing to the WHAM! project. Located alongside the award-winning White Castle Vineyard, which had its wine showcased at the Wales NATO summit, I very much look forward to seeing Croft Barn brought back into productive use as an all-age learning centre for heritage and viticulture skills in Monmouthshire. I wish those involved all the best with their endeavours."

Jennifer Stewart, Head of HLF Wales said: "We are thrilled that this grant will provide more opportunities for people to learn about their local heritage. Communities are at the heart of the projects that we support and this project will give people the opportunity to engage with and learn about the rich, agricultural history and viticulture of north Monmouthshire."

Notes to editors

About The Village Alive Trust Ymddiriedolaeth y Pentre Byw

The Trust www.villagealivetrust.org.uk was formed in 2004 to help rural regeneration by boosting tourism, in an area badly affected by the Foot and Mouth crisis, through projects which allow public access to conserved heritage buildings on local farms. Since then many community events have been organised including the first Monmouthshire Pear and Perry Festival and the Trust has also delivered a grant scheme for numerous heritage projects throughout Monmouthshire in collaboration with Monmouthshire County Council.

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) aims to make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities across the UK and help build a resilient heritage economy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported almost 36,000 projects with more than £6bn across the UK including more than £280million to more than 2,100 projects in Wales. www.hlf.org.uk.

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For further information, photo opportunities and interviews, please contact Pat Griffiths, chairman of The Village Alive Trust on 01873 821418 or by email pjgriff100@aol.com or Rev Dr Jean Prosser MBE secretary of The Village Alive Trust on 01873 821405 or by email village.alive@btinternet.com