



Seaford Museum & Heritage Society

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PRESS NOTICE: Embargo 16th February 2016

Museum Project ramps up and lifts off thanks to National Lottery Grant.

The exciting long-awaited project to install a new footbridge and lift at Seaford Museum is now back on track thanks to a timely grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) of £100,000, which has been announced this week.

The project was first suggested in 2010 when the Trustees of the Keith Baker Charitable Will Trust approached the Museum with an offer of a grant to make the Museum accessible to wheelchair users and other less mobile people. "It was a very generous offer, which became a massive challenge" said Kay Turvey, Seaford Museum Chairman. "The past years have seen a series of ups and downs as various problems were encountered and eventually overcome, but throughout that time we have enjoyed the active support of the Keith Baker Trust, who have pledged £200,000 to the project, as well as many other local groups and people".

The Seaford Museum improved access project will see the installation of a new ramped footbridge; an internal lift; ramping to the lower ground floor exhibition space; new energy efficient LED lighting and improved displays and interpretation material.

"This means that for the first time Martello Tower 74, which houses our important museum of local history, will be accessible to all our members and visitors" added Kay Turvey.

Seaford Museum is located in Martello Tower 74 which was the last of a series of defensive forts constructed along the coast of Sussex and Kent as a reaction to the threat of a Napoleonic invasion. Although 74 were built in the southeast of England fewer than half remain and this is the only one open to the public throughout the year.

The walls are up to 10 feet thick and it is surrounded by a 20 feet deep moat. The original access to the Tower was across a drawbridge; there were only two small windows and movement between the various levels was by way of trapdoors and ladders. Subsequently the drawbridge was removed and part of the moat covered over to form the promenade leaving the only way into the museum through a narrow door and down a set of steep stairs. "At the moment it's not the most welcoming of buildings for visitors!" commented Kay Turvey.

The Tower is a Scheduled Ancient Monument which has meant that all proposals have had to be approved not just by the local planning authorities but also by Historic England (previously English Heritage). The original plan had been to put the lift in the moat, but that was ruled as visually unacceptable, so a number of alternative ideas were drawn up by the scheme's Architects, the Brighton based Morgan Carn Partnership Architects. "Without their creative skills, enthusiasm and patience the project might have folded very early on", said Kay Turvey.

more follows.....

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Registered Museum no: 1497 and Registered Charity no: 1158790

The Seaford Museum Improved Access Project is supported by the Keith Baker Trust and the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund

The latest blow to the project was a change in the VAT rules which meant that the zero rate VAT allowance for work on historic buildings was removed, leading to a potential 20% increase in the costs of the work. However, the Museum has obtained a ruling from HMRC which has allowed the new access to be classified as a ramp which does qualify for zero rate VAT, but the removal of the general concession will apply to other essential work and the change will still add about £30,000 to the cost, bringing it up to just under £300,000 overall.

Fortunately an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund was submitted and a grant of £100,000 has recently been approved. "Without that generous grant we might well have been stuck" said Kay Turvey, "It goes to show that it's not just National Lottery winners who benefit from the weekly flutter, but small local charities such as ourselves. We can now look forward to the building work starting later this year and our Museum being opened up to even more visitors and students in 2017.

"We will also be able to offer volunteering and learning opportunities to people who have been excluded up to now because they haven't been able to get into the building, and we will be reducing our running costs by installing energy efficient LED lighting, particularly important in a building which had no windows or natural light.

"We believe that by making the Museum more accessible we will be able to make an important contribution to making the Seaford seafront more attractive to visitors and residents alike and make a contribution to the local economy and wellbeing of the town.

"We have a busy but exciting few months ahead of us".

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Note to editors:

About Seaford Museum

It is a registered charity, (1158790) and a Registered Museum (1497) and is managed entirely by volunteers and funded through membership subscriptions and donations. www.seafordmuseum.co.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. www.hlf.org.uk@heritagelottery

Images below: pdf versions attached.



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Seaford Museum: new footbridge 1



Seaford Museum: new footbridge 2



Seaford Museum: new footbridge 3 - photomontage