



Billingham International *Folklore Festival*



50 Years of the Billingham International Folklore Festival to be recorded and remembered thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund

The world-famous Billingham International Folklore Festival will soon be marking its 50th Anniversary. A generous grant of £49,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) will enable the full story of the festival to be told through recording the memories of those who have organised, volunteered and performed there across those 50 years.

Over the next four years, from now until 2014, these historic memoirs will be built into a huge and permanent computer archive making them accessible and free of charge for the first time. The archive will not only hold records of the actual artistic performances but will also show the legacy of the Festival, how it has evolved over the years and its effect on the life of Billingham and its community.

"The Festival is impossible to define in a single interview or even in a whole book or television programme," says Festival Director Joe Maloney. 'It's not simply about dance, music and colourful costumes, although they're hugely important elements of it. This project will create a resource to help people understand their history and heritage.'

'Everyone who has ever been to the Festival, and we're talking about tens of thousands of people, not just locally but internationally, as you'd expect with an event like ours, has his or her own memories which we'd like them to share,' says Joe. 'It's those memories which will form the core of the archive and, thanks to the vision that the Heritage Lottery Fund shares with us, over the next few months we'll be getting the programme rolling by putting in place a series of initiatives to pull people together in a variety of ways so that they can reminisce and tell their stories. This isn't something that can be undertaken by just a few people. We'll be involving, in particular, students and schoolchildren because this is, after all, their heritage. We want them to talk to Festival visitors and participants both past and present and we'll train a group of them to do so using a variety of media.'

Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the North East, Ivor Crowther said:

"The Heritage Lottery Fund is delighted to support this project that will tell the story of the Billingham International Folklore Festival and remember the people that have been involved with it. Over the last 50 years, the festival has become hugely popular with local people and visitors alike and it is important that their memories are preserved for generations to come. Not only will the history of this wonderful event be remembered and shared with new audiences through the creation of a new website and online archive, it will also create a range of volunteering and learning opportunities for the local community."

The project will also benefit greatly from the support of the local media, who themselves, as Joe points out, hold and are custodians of a wealth of information about the Festival over the last half century.

'We've always been superbly supported by our newspapers, radio and television stations,' he says, 'and we hope that they'll do so again now to make this project, the biggest of its kind ever undertaken anywhere, the success that we and our HLF partners know it will be. So, although it's a cliché, watch this space.'

For further information, please contact me, Keith Proud, Press Officer, Billingham International Folklore Festival at the Festival Office, Stockton Business Centre, 70 Brunswick Street, Stockton-on-Tees TS18 1DW, on my mobile 07890 684633, or e-mail:

Notes to Editors
Heritage Lottery Fund

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. 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 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4 billion across the UK with £209 million in the North East alone.

Website: www.hlf.org.uk



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