

£640,000 boost to the North West's museum collections

London, 4th April 2006 – Seven museums in the North West are benefiting from funding to enhance their collections, which are among some of the most important in the country. The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) is making the awards from its Designation Challenge Fund to ensure that these outstanding collections can be enjoyed and appreciated by as many people as possible.

Details of the successful applicants in the North West are as follows:

- **Lancashire County Museum Service** has been awarded £98,500 to produce a virtual exhibition celebrating post-war developments within the Lancashire Textile Industry. The project will tell previously untold stories about the more recent past of the industry such as the importance of workforce migration from the Indian subcontinent.
- **Manchester City Galleries** will be using its grant of £100,000 to appoint a Community Interpretation Officer who will work with community groups to explore the many meanings behind the gallery's fine, decorative art and costume collections. The project will encourage users to see the collections as something that belongs to them and it will produce a series of online resources, displays and events.
- **The Museum of Science and Industry** in Manchester has been awarded £98,940 to bring to life its collections of things used or made by the people of the North West. The 'Histories Revealed' project will collect personal stories behind the items it collected before the 1990s and make these stories available to everyone through online resources and travelling exhibitions.
- **The People's History Museum** will be spending £89,600 to create a temporary exhibition on the Growth of British Democracy 1800-2000. It will interpret the progress of reform as it affected the lives of the British working people and objects not previously seen by the public will be researched, conserved and exhibited through collaboration with the other museums in Manchester and further afield.
- **Whitworth Art Gallery**, at the University of Manchester has been awarded £59,000 to explore the textile pattern books assembled at Thomas Wardle's Printworks in Leeks and offer new insights into the working processes of late nineteenth century designers, retailers and manufacturers. The notes are very important, including records of dye experiments carried out for William Morris. The fragile books themselves will be made available for users online, using innovative book-browsing technology.
- **The Wordsworth Trust** has been awarded £93,672 to explore the role of women contained in the books, letters, journals and art that forms the Trust's outstanding holdings. 500 letters and 750 paintings will be digitised and made available online with the ability to view interactive information about the writers and hear sound files of the original poems and songs. The new research will contribute to a touring exhibition, talks, workshops and family activities.
- **The Boat Museum**, Ellesmere Port is one of three museums in the **Waterways Trust** that will benefit from a grant of £100,000, in a project that will give new life to old boats. Eighty historic vessels in the collection are in need of conservation assessment, research and innovative interpretation. The fascinating histories of these 80 vessels will be researched and the resulting information will be digitised and available online and in the National Waterway Museum's galleries.

In total thirty-four projects across England are benefiting from £3million worth of funding. This has been made available through MLA's Renaissance programme to transform England's regional museums. All of the projects will build on the recommendations of the Museums Association's *Collections for the Future* report.

Chris Batt, Chief Executive of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council explains: "MLA's vision for the future of England's museums is of places where everyone can be inspired to learn and to enjoy these fantastic collections. Our role is to encourage museums to exploit fully the possibilities for these collections, exploring innovative ways to reach audiences whether in the local community or beyond. I am delighted that MLA can continue to give direct financial support to North West museums through Renaissance."

Mark Taylor, Director of the Museums Association added, "These awards will shed new light on some of England's most important museum collections, enabling many more people to enjoy them through new displays and exhibitions, on the web and through outreach events. Over the years, the Designation Challenge Fund has done much to help people engage with collections of national significance and I am delighted that, this year, the Fund has focused on the recommendations of *Collections for the Future*. These awards are a vital step forward in helping museums to realise the potential of their collections more fully."

Renaissance is the first central government investment programme of its kind, aiming to make the collections of regional museums more closely connected with local communities.

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Press contact

For further information or a full list of the awards, please contact Gemma Crisp/Clare Waller at Kinross and Render PR mla@kinrossrender.com, 020 7592 3100

Notes to Editors

MLA

MLA is the national development agency for museums, libraries and archives, advising the government on policy and priorities for the sector. MLA's roles are to provide strategic leadership, to act as a powerful advocate, to develop capacity and to promote innovation and change.

www.mla.gov.uk

The Designation Scheme

The Designation Scheme, managed by MLA, aims to identify and celebrate the best museum, library and archive collections in England; those that are deemed to be of outstanding national and international importance. The Scheme recognises that organisations with Designated collections care for a significant part of England's cultural heritage.

Renaissance

Renaissance is a national scheme to transform England's regional museums, led by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. By 2008, £150 million will have gone to help regional museums across the country raise standards and deliver real results in support of education, learning, community development and economic regeneration.

Renaissance affects the entire museums sector. A network of 'Hubs' has been set up in each English region to act as flagship museums and promote good practice. Alongside the Hubs, Regional Agencies and Museum Development Officers are providing advice and support, Subject Specialist Networks have been set up, and national museums are sharing their skills and collections.

Renaissance is helping museums to meet people's changing needs - and to change people's lives. <http://www.mla.gov.uk/action/regional/00renaiss.asp>

The Museums Association

The Museums Association (MA) is an independent membership organisation representing museums and galleries in the UK and people who work for them. The Association has over 5,000

individual members and 600 institutional members. These institutional members run around 1500 museums in the UK ranging from the largest government-funded national museums to small volunteer-run charitable trust museums. It is a charity, receiving no regular government funding, which seeks to inform, represent and develop museums and people who work for them in order that they may provide a better service to society and the public.

www.museumsassociation.org