



## HISTORIC ENGLAND AWARDS AN EVERYDAY HERITAGE GRANT TO HIGHLIGHT WEST NORTHUMBERLAND'S COAL MINING HISTORY

Funding has been awarded to Queen's Hall for a heritage project in Hexham and West Northumberland which highlights the area's once vital but now fast disappearing mining heritage as part of Historic England's 'Everyday Heritage Grants: Celebrating Working Class History.'

The new grant scheme was launched by Historic England earlier this year to support community-led projects and further the nation's collective understanding of the past.

Community and heritage organisations were invited to apply for grants to unlock untold local stories and hidden histories.

A grant of £9,850 has been awarded to Hexham based Queens Hall Arts for the project '*Beneath Our Feet*.' The funds will support an exciting project with 14 schools in rural west Northumberland exploring the area's once vital but now fast disappearing mining heritage, the impact it had on the wider world and the hidden histories of the working-class people it employed.

The quarries, lead and mineral mines of west Northumberland helped to build cities, create art and support the worldwide economy. Now these sites are almost invisible within the rural landscape and the stories of the mining communities are silent.

Mining once dominated the tiny hamlet of Settlingstones. From the mid 19th century until 1969, workers here produced over half a million tons of a Witherite, a rare mineral instrumental in the creation of Josiah Wedgwood's world-famous Jasperware. Just along the road in Fourstones, Prudham sandstone quarry produced stone that was used prestigious buildings such as Edinburgh's Balmoral Hotel on Princes Street.

Despite this legacy, this history is recognised in museums and local pupils and their families know little about it. The project *Beneath Our Feet*, will allow children and young people of all ages, from reception to year 13, to find out about the lives of miners and their communities through visits to heritage sites, talks from local people linked to mining and researching archive resources.

They will then choose three artists to work with to find new and exciting ways to co-create artworks and resources so they can share this working-class history with their schools and wider communities.

The 14 schools taking part are: Haydon Bridge High School, Bellingham Middle School, Allendale Primary School Bellingham Primary School, Greenhaugh Primary School, Greenhead Primary School, Haltwhistle Primary School, Henshaw Primary School, Kielder Primary School, Newbrough Primary School, Otterburn Primary School, Wark Primary School, Whitfield Primary School.

**Duncan Wilson, Chief Executive of Historic England, said:** "Heritage should be for everyone. I am delighted that we are able to provide funding for this project through our Everyday Heritage Grants, which will help to bring our collective and shared history back to life. These grants will enable people to tell their own stories, in their own way, and connect with others in their communities through a shared understanding of their local heritage.

He continued: "The histories of castles and great houses and their inhabitants are well documented, but we know far less about our everyday heritage. From council estates, pubs and

clubs, to farms, factories and shipyards, these are the places where most people have lived, worked and played for hundreds of years. We want to explore these untold stories and celebrate the people and places at the heart of our history.”

Everyday Heritage Grants: Celebrating Working Class Histories is one of many ongoing cultural projects that Historic England is delivering in order to shine a light on the diversity of the nation’s heritage.

**Watch this space for more information on our *Beneath Our Feet* project.**