

Morpeth station secures £797,000 of National Lottery funding

Ambitious plans to give Morpeth Railway Station a major facelift at the same time as creating trackside offices for small businesses have moved a significant step closer with the news that the project has been awarded £797,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) writes Ian Leech.

Greater Morpeth Development Trust (GMDT) has secured the money from the HLF's Heritage Enterprise scheme which through grants can meet some of the costs of repairing neglected historic buildings that would otherwise not be considered commercially viable.

For the past four years GMDT has been working with partners and funders preparing the plans for the 167 year old Grade II listed station building, designed by architect Benjamin Green for the Newcastle & Berwick Railway Company. Morpeth Station is now regarded as one of finest surviving examples of Green's 'Jacobethan' style railway buildings on the East Coast main line between London and Edinburgh.

It is, however, the only one of Green's surviving station buildings in Northumberland to retain passenger facilities.

The plan is restore the historic features of the station's buildings as well as developing offices to create a sustainable future for them by providing enterprise space for seven small businesses. The £1.6m scheme also includes work to re-open the station's original portico entrance as well as providing a cafeteria/ bistro and modernising the ticket office and toilets facilities.

In addition to the National Lottery funding GMDT has secured £250,000 from the Railway Heritage Trust which supports the preservation, upkeep and future sustainability of buildings and structures that form part of Britain's historic rail network, and is in advanced talks with potential partners including Northumberland County Council, Network Rail and train operator's Northern Rail/Arriva to complete the required final funding package.

GMDT's Chief Executive David Lodge told Inside Morpeth: "The HLF award is a huge step forward towards delivering our proposals for Morpeth Railway Station and we are now confident that we will be in a position to start work on site by the end of this year.

"Securing this grant signifies that HLF has bought into our vision to restore the station buildings to their former glory by giving them a sustainable future and making them fit-for-purposes for the growing number of people who are travelling by train to and



The Flying Scotsman arrives in Morpeth Station before the funding news was announced

from Morpeth. New rail services for Morpeth travellers have already been announced and along with plans to re-open the Blyth & Tyne line to passenger traffic and the new private housing being built around town, they will significantly increase the number people using the station.

"The condition of the station buildings has deteriorated over a number of years and much of the vacant space is currently unused.

"We plan to change that by creating up to seven serviced offices for small businesses in what would be a unique setting at the side of the East Coast main line track.

"There is a shortage of bespoke offices for small businesses in Morpeth and our plans will go some way towards meeting that demand. Being in the station would also be a wonderful marketing opportunity for new small businesses to get noticed."

With a build time of around eight months the Trust hopes that the work on the renovated station buildings would be complete by the end of summer 2017.

The station project is the second time GMDT will have been involved in restoring one of Morpeth's most historic buildings. Seven years ago it project managed improvements to the 300 year old Morpeth Town Hall designed by Sir John Vanbrugh who was also credited with designing Blenheim Palace and Castle Howard.



It's a dirty job driving the 'Scotsman' – but someone has to do it!