

National Lottery grant puts “Terrier” on the curriculum

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The Terrier Trust CIO has received £33,000 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for The Terrier Poplar Education Project. Thanks to National Lottery players, the project will create an educational programme for primary school children in Poplar featuring the Trust’s 150-year-old steam locomotive No 70 ‘Poplar’, one of the oldest operational in the UK.

Built in 1872 by the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway, No 70 was the first of the class constructed and like others of the type was named after areas served by the railway. Today Poplar is part of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the initiative which will see project partners, Global Learning London (GLL), work with children in the area to co-create an immersive National Curriculum based programme, resulting in resource boxes for schools. The project will culminate in the second quarter of 2022 with a procession by the children in conjunction with an event featuring locomotive ‘Poplar’ – the engine visiting London for the schoolchildren and local community to enjoy.

The Kent & East Sussex Railway (K&ESR), the heritage railway where locomotive is normally resident, is also a partner in the innovative educational scheme which complements the line’s existing programme of school activities.

The resource boxes will be available to schools nationally through Schools Library Services and are likely to include materials relating to historic themes such as commuting the 1870s, East End hop picking “holidays” in Kent, and the development of light railways (the K&ESR was the first and the Docklands Light Railway is the latest).

Pupils studying science and geography will look at sources of energy, changing environmental considerations, and the impact of railway development worldwide; while railway themed stories, poems, music and drawing will help develop English, music and arts skills.

David Nibloe, a Trustee of both The Terrier Trust CIO and The Kent & East Sussex Railway, who is leading the project said: “We are delighted to be reaching a new audience in this way. Our locomotive’s historic link with East London enables the 150 years of social history witnessed to be brought to life, including the development of light railways in the days of steam through to today’s Docklands Light Railway, and East Enders’ annual hop-picking ‘holidays’ in Kent – many journeys ending with a ride along the Kent & East Sussex Railway hauled by this very engine.”

Commenting on the award, The Terrier Trust’s Chairman, Tom White said: “We are delighted that we have received this support thanks to National Lottery players. Our project is an exciting opportunity to encourage interest in our heritage steam locomotive through the creation of a National Curriculum based education programme. A unique feature of the programme is that it will be shaped by children in the area after which our locomotive was named. A wider benefit is that this material will then be shared with other primary schools through the nationwide Schools Library Services.”

Helen Ashby OBE BA FMA, Director of The International Railway Heritage Consultancy Ltd and former Head of Knowledge & Collections at the National Railway Museum, said: “The associated schools programme, both in Tower Hamlets and at the Kent & East Sussex Railway will provide both useful learning for the young people and lasting memories. In turn, this will support a sustainable future for the locomotive, in that it will raise its profile, creating future enthusiasm and volunteer potential to deliver its long-term care. I particularly like the idea of co-curating the programme with the local community, which will ensure their engagement with and understanding of their heritage.”

Paul Jackson, Headteacher at Manorfield Primary School, said: “In today’s fast-paced world, where we are all looking forward to the ‘future’ it is so important that we pause and don’t forget our past and the rich heritage that surrounds us. Whilst there is much excitement amongst our children and young people for the technology of today, we wouldn’t be where we are without the technological breakthroughs of the past. This is a great opportunity for children for many years to come to celebrate the past whilst enhancing their learning through a hands-on experience in their immediate community.”

Dee Bleach, Headteacher at Mayflower Primary School, said: “What a great opportunity this project presents to Poplar schools, a tangible link to the past, we are looking forward to getting our pupils at Mayflower involved.”

Photo credit: Terrier Trust