Telling Our Story: Digbeth Speaks

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Telling Our Story: Digbeth Speaks (Friends of Birmingham Archives and Heritage) celebrates £9700 Heritage Lottery Fund grant.

The Friends of Birmingham Archives and Heritage is one of the first groups in the UK to receive a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) All Our Stories grant. This exciting project, Digbeth Speaks, in Birmingham, is devised and led by young members of the Friends of Birmingham Archives and Heritage. It has been given £9700 to explore and preserve Digbeth's diverse heritage for the future by creating an audio and visual 'time capsule' of the area's diverse communities at a pivotal moment of redevelopment.

All Our Stories, a brand new small grant programme, launched earlier this year in support of BBC Two's The Great British Story - has been designed as an opportunity for everyone to get involved in their heritage. With HLF funding and support, community groups will carry out activities that help people explore, share and celebrate their local heritage.

The popular series presented by historian Michael Wood and supported by a programme of BBC Learning activities and events got thousands of us asking questions about our history and inspired us to look at our history in a different way through the eyes of ordinary people.

The programme and HLF All Our Stories has proved a real hit and now Digbeth Speaks is one of hundreds of successful projects around the UK to receive a grant. Digbeth Speaks will record stories relating to this unique area of inner city Birmingham, for an archive that will be housed in Birmingham Archives and Heritage and made permanently accessible to the public. The project will capture a snapshot of Digbeth as it is now, recording the diverse arts organisations, small businesses and community groups, as well as the thriving events and festival scene. The project will be carried out by young volunteer researchers who will gain invaluable experience in project management and community engagement projects. They will also have the rare opportunity to have training in conducting oral history interviews and recordings, equipping them with the skills to continue to engage with communities and lead exciting heritage projects in the future.

TV presenter and historian Michael Wood, said: "We British love our history, and no wonder: few nations in the world, if any, have such riches on their doorstep, and so much of it accessible to all of us. It is really tremendous that the people of Birmingham have been inspired to get involved to tell their own story and to dig deeper into their own past. It's brilliant that so many people are being given the chance to get involved through the All Our Stories grant. Having travelled the length and breadth of the British Isles this last year filming the Great British Story, I am certain that fascinating and moving stories will be uncovered which will not only bring to life the excitement of local history, but will illuminate and enrich every community's connection with the national narrative."

Commenting on the award, **Carly Hegenbarth** - AHRC-funded **PhD student in History of Art (/postgraduate/courses/research/histart/history-art.aspx)** at the University and committee member of the Friends of Birmingham Archives and Heritage (FOBAH) - said: "It's fantastic to have been awarded this grant; we are really delighted. Digbeth is a fascinating area of Birmingham with such a rich variety of communities, and this will enable us to record some of that for the future. Contemporary culture isn't often captured in this way and we're really looking forward to being able to share what's great about Digbeth now with generations to come.

Reyahn King, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands, said: "Clearly the success of All Our Stories has reinforced the fact that we are indeed a nation of story tellers and that we want to explore and dig deeper into our past and discover more about what really matters to us. This is exactly what the grant will do for Digbeth Speaks as they embark on a real journey of discovery.

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