



PRESS RELEASE – Embargoed until 00.01 on Monday July 4<sup>th</sup> 2022

## National Lottery Heritage Fund backs Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue/Welsh Jewish Heritage Centre Project

It has just been announced that the Foundation for Jewish Heritage\* has been successful in its funding submission to the National Lottery Heritage Fund\* & Welsh Government's Transforming Towns programme in respect of its plans to develop a Welsh Jewish Heritage Centre at the historic former synagogue at Merthyr Tydfil.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund grant will cover Development Phase funding of just under £400,000 which will enable the Foundation to progress the detailed planning of the project working with its various institutional partners. Assuming the Development Phase is successful, the Foundation will then make a second round submission to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for Delivery Phase funding.

Welsh Government's Transforming Towns Programme is providing £107,800 of support to the project, which forms part the proposals within the Placemaking Plan for the town centre, with an additional £25,000 of funding for the Development Phase being provided by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, which is a leading advisor to the project.

In 2018, the Foundation conducted a Feasibility Study funded by the Muriel and Gershon Coren Charitable Trust exploring the viability of a Heritage Centre at the grade II listed building that was deemed as being at risk. The Foundation went on to purchase the site in 2019 and carried out urgent repairs in 2020 with financial support from private Trusts, individual donors and Cadw, the Welsh Government's historic environment service.

The vision for the Heritage Centre is that it will present the 250+ year history, traditions and culture of the Welsh Jewish community while also addressing contemporary issues around religious and ethnic diversity, promoting inter-faith and inter-cultural dialogue while combating ignorance and prejudice.

This is a major moment for the project with the concept of creating a Welsh Jewish Heritage Centre within the synagogue receiving the formal backing of the leading heritage funding body in the UK.

The project has a dedicated website – <https://jewishheritage.wales/> which indicates the 47 Advisors and 16 Partner Agencies. Gerald Jones MP and Dawn Bowden MS are the project's Special Ambassadors, and Huw Edwards recently joined as a Patron alongside David Baddiel and Sir Michael Moritz.

Dame Helen Hyde, the Chair of the Foundation for Jewish Heritage, commented: "We are deeply grateful to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Welsh Government and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council for recognising the value and significance of this special project that will tell the remarkable story of the Welsh Jewish community while also tackling important issues within our society of today."

Stephen Goldman, a Foundation Trustee and the Chair of the project's Steering Committee added: "It is a vital step forward for this exciting and innovative project which will provide a new and unique educational and cultural venue. We really appreciate the very generous backing that is being provided

for this important next development phase by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, and the Welsh Government.”

Michael Mail, Chief Executive of the Foundation, stated: “Merthyr Tydfil synagogue represents shared heritage – it is a special Jewish story and a special Welsh story. Through this crucial financial support, we hope to be able to save a listed building at risk, the most important Jewish heritage site in Wales, and provide a solution that will secure its future and make an important contribution to Merthyr and Wales as a whole.”

Andrew White, Director of the National Lottery Heritage Fund in Wales said: “It is our privilege to support the Foundation for Jewish Heritage’s project with a grant to develop their proposals to establish a bilingual Welsh Jewish Heritage Centre at the historic synagogue in Merthyr Tydfil. This funding will allow the Foundation to refine their plans and apply for additional funding to realise their ambitious vision.”

Cllr Geraint Thomas, Leader of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration, said: “The Council is thrilled to hear this excellent news about the Lottery Heritage grant and Welsh Government funding.

“The Synagogue has been a landmark town centre building for more than two centuries, and it’s so important that its unique historical architecture is preserved and restored.

“We’re also delighted that Merthyr Tydfil will be home to the Welsh Jewish Heritage Centre and further enhance our ever-growing tourism offer.”

#### **Notes to Editors**

##### **About the Foundation for Jewish Heritage**

\*The London-based Foundation for Jewish Heritage works to preserve Jewish heritage at risk. Trustees include Sir Simon Schama CBE, Lord Daniel Finkelstein and Simon Sebag Montefiore. Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue is its flagship project. [www.foundationforjewishheritage.com/](http://www.foundationforjewishheritage.com/)

##### **About The National Lottery Heritage Fund**

\* Using money raised by the National Lottery, we Inspire, lead and resource the UK’s heritage to create positive and lasting change for people and communities, now and in the future.  
<https://www.hertagefund.org.uk/in-your-area/wales>

Thanks to National Lottery players, more than £30 million goes to good causes across the UK every week.

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