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## **Digging Deep: Coal Miners of African Caribbean Heritage, National Narratives from across the UK**



Nottingham News Centre wins National Lottery support

Nottingham News Centre CIC has received £96,700 support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a unique project titled, ***Digging Deep: Coal Miners of African Caribbean Heritage, National Narratives from across the UK.***

The two-year project, based in Nottingham, East Midlands UK, commencing April 2017 and ends April 2019, will work in collaboration with project partners: Communities Inc. Nottingham and the National Coal Mining Museum for England (NCMMfE) in Yorkshire. Led by volunteers from across the UK and made possible by National Lottery players, the project focuses on collating and sharing the experiences of former coal miners, of African Caribbean heritage, exhibited through a variety of media-based, creative art forms.

Over decades, African Caribbean coal miners stood shoulder to shoulder with white British, European and Asian miners, toiling underground to help fuel the UK economy. Some even died in the process. Yet they are the forgotten ones. Their part in Britain's industrial past has never been told...until now. Hundreds of black men worked in deep coal mines across the UK with concentrations of black miners, for example, in Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Yorkshire, Bristol, Kent, Durham, south Wales, Irish and Scottish mines. Gedling Colliery Nottinghamshire, was known as 'The Pit of Nations', as it was thought that black miners made up at least a quarter of the workforce (between the 1950s-1980s), as symbolised on the Gedling colliery banner.

Due to the resounding success of Nottingham News Centre's one year pilot HLF project titled, *Miners of African Caribbean Heritage: Narratives from Nottinghamshire* and the momentum gained from a renewal in public interest into mining heritage, this exciting project will expand and increase public awareness and access plus a richer understanding of the contributions made to Britain's industrial past by miners of African Caribbean heritage from across the UK.

## Project activities

This two-year project will:

1. **Research and collate personal narratives/oral histories** of former miners of African Caribbean heritage, from across the UK with the valuable support of volunteers from across the UK.
2. **Through partnership work, help to incorporate elements of former black miners' narratives/oral histories (format: quotes, photos, portraits, artifacts) for public access, into various mining heritage sites/museums** such as: the National Coal Mining Museum for England UK, (Wakefield, Yorkshire), Bilsthorpe Mining Museum (Nottinghamshire), Gedling Country Park Heritage Centre, (proposed in Nottinghamshire), Big Pit National Coal Mining Museum (South Wales) and the National Mining Museum, Midlothian (Scotland).
3. **Produce a high quality documentary video** about the narratives of the coal miners of African heritage project for public viewing.
4. **Offer presenting, interviewing and video production training** for volunteers.
5. **Offer creative learning workshops** creating coal art sculpture/ design as well as group activities understanding sustainable energy and ecology. Workshops are aimed at young and older people with sessions facilitated by professional artists/ scientists.
6. **Create an online archive** of former black miners' narratives (i.e. scripts and audio, photographs, images, video links and database) for public access and development.
7. Create an **exciting and unique touring, photographic exhibition** of former black miners to be displayed at mining museum as well as available for hire to schools, educational organisations and community groups (both local and national), featuring rare mining artifacts, images, research information and oral histories shared, collated by volunteer ex-miners and project participants.

## Project outcomes

**Outcomes for heritage:** experiences of black miners from across the East Midlands and the UK will be better identified, recorded, interpreted and explained. The research and new knowledge gained, will be available through an online archive linked to local and national mining heritage sites for the public, ensuring a more balanced, richer, historical discourse.

**Outcomes for people:** volunteers from diverse groups, both young and more senior as well as volunteer former miners, will have access to creative learning activities such as: coal art (sculpture), media skills training, publishing experience, project management, planning and exhibition curating and management. In addition, volunteers will experience life skills such as: teambuilding, self-confidence strategies, and organisational and speaking/presenting skills. The project will also help improve national attitudes and behaviours towards collective contributions made by diverse groups in the history of UK industry. In addition, a wider range of people, from different geographical areas around the UK, will have fresh opportunities to engage in mining heritage, as it will be more inclusive, modern in output and richer in content.

### **Supporting statements**

*“Coal mining played a significant role in the heritage of communities across the UK, and particularly in Nottinghamshire. This project will shine a light on an often under-explored part of the story of coal, and investigates the experiences of African Caribbean miners in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We are delighted that National Lottery players have been able to help make this project a reality.”* **Jonathan Platt, Head of HLF East Midlands**

*“Communities Inc. is pleased to be involved in the ‘Digging Deep’ National HLF Project. The pilot project in 2015-2016 that led to this advanced project, highlights the importance of capturing and showcasing the heritage of diverse communities and their contribution to life in the UK. Scaling the project up is a brilliant idea.”* **Michael Henry, Director Communities Inc. Project Partner**

*“We are delighted to be involved in the project and feel that these are voices and memories from the coal industry that would otherwise be lost. Miners of Afro Caribbean heritage are underrepresented in our collections and this is a wonderful opportunity for us to work towards redressing this.”*

**Mike Benson, Museum Director, National Coal Mining Museum for England, Project Partner**

*“Big Pit National Coal Museum Wales are very interested in the heritage project, ‘Digging Deep’ including its aims and outcomes as described in the application made by Nottingham News Centre CIC. We would be willing to assist in any historical research needed during the duration of the project.”*

**Dai Price, Head of Museum, Big Pit National Coal Museum, Wales**

*“I believe that this is a critical time to capture the experiences, memories and cultural contributions of black miners. The project offers diverse cultural opportunities and activities, which will engage individuals and families and raise awareness of their cultural contributions to wider audiences.”*

**Chris Weir, Historian & former Principal Archivist, Nottinghamshire Archives**

**ENDS**

### **Notes to Editors**

#### **About Nottingham News Centre**

Nottingham News Centre CIC, founded in 2013, is a community interest company (social enterprise) specialising in project management heritage research, content and media production (print, online, broadcast and exhibitions), training and publishing services. Based in Nottingham, we provide project management and media services for individuals and organisations at local, national and international levels.

#### **About the Heritage Lottery Fund**

Heritage Lottery Fund - thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk). Follow us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and use #NationalLottery and #HLFsupported.

## Contact information

For further information, images and interviews please contact:

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**Project website:** www.blackcoalminers.com

### **Social Media:**

Facebook/coalminersofafricanheritage

Twitter: @nottsnewscentre

### **Related media interest:**

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/oct/24/black-miners-britain-nottingham>

<http://www.voice-online.co.uk/article/untold-story-britains-black-miners>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-37298751>

<http://nottstv.com/programmes/news/?videoid=5167868504001>

<http://nottinghamnewscentre.com/projects/digging-deep-coal-miners-of-african-caribbean-heritage->

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOHHcTgzs5E> (BBC *Inside Out* East Midlands, *Brothers Beneath the Surface* at approx. 20 mins into programme)

### Project partners:



### Supporting organisations:

