



## News Release

Talking about the West Midlands European Regional Development Fund Programme

**Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2014**

For immediate release

### **£3 million regeneration scheme gets green light to transform historic canal tunnels and mines**

Local tourist attraction, Dudley Canal Tunnel and Limestone Mines is set to embark on a master plan of improvement activities that will attract thousands of extra visitors every year, and add to the already impressive tourism regeneration plans in full swing at nearby attractions Dudley Zoological Gardens and the Black Country Living Museum.

Work is set to include the build of a brand new visitor Portal where you will be able to learn more about the history and importance of the canal tunnels and mines. A new canal bridge will also be built to help connect the Portal and towpaths with the Black Country Living Museum nearby.

The improvements are to be made possible with a £1 million grant from the European Regional Development Fund, which is managed by the Department for Communities and Local Government, a £989,200 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), and further support from the J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Trust, Wolfson Foundation, Dudley Canal Trust (Trips) Limited and the Dudley Canal Trust.

Communities Minister Baroness Stowell of Beeston MBE said:

“With the help of past investments from the Programme, work is already well underway in this area of Dudley to develop the current visitor experience. These new improvements on the canals and mines take this one stage further to generate a huge benefit to the tourism offer and local economy.

“It is important that we are able to use European funding in this way to support local businesses and people and I am really pleased that we have been able to help make this happen. I look forward to seeing how the work develops over the coming months”.

Jeff Luesley, Chairman of Dudley Canal Trust (Trips) Limited commented: “This is fantastic news. It means we now have funding in place to build both phases of the development in one go. If all goes to plan we hope to start building this summer with completion twelve months later.

This will be a major step towards the Dudley Council’s Castle Hill project which also includes Dudley Zoological Gardens and the Black Country Living Museum and enhances links with Wren’s Nest National Nature Reserve to create a major tourist venue of national importance.”



To find out more about the work to take place at the Dudley Canal Tunnel and Limestone Mines, contact:

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#### **Editor's Notes:**

The Department for Communities and Local Government is the managing authority for the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Programme which runs from 2007 to 2013. This is one of the funds established by the European Commission to help local areas stimulate their economic development.

The West Midlands European Regional Development Fund Programme has been allocated 400 million euros to invest in projects which will support local businesses and create jobs.

In the West Midlands the priority areas and themes are:

- **Innovation and Research & Development**  
Increasing investment in research and development through helping businesses take forward new innovation, sharing of knowledge and developing and demonstrating new technology
- **Enterprise Development**  
Increasing business performance through supporting high growth businesses, improving resource efficiency, providing access to finance and developing a strong entrepreneurial culture
- **Sustainable Urban Development**  
Improving the performance of key urban areas through regenerating local areas, encouraging investment and new businesses, creating job opportunities and helping communities most in need
- **Inter-Regional Activity**  
Working with European partners to learn and improve, share and apply best practice and solve problems

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