



Leicester
City Council

Press Office

News release

No: 989-17

Date: December 14, 2017

Release: Immediate

Heritage Lottery Fund pulls funding for new railway museum

THE Board of Trustees responsible for administering Heritage Lottery funding has informed the Great Central Railway (GCR) that it will not be supporting its plans for a new railway museum at Birstall.

In 2015 the board earmarked more than £9.5 million for the Main Line project, subject to a Stage two submission, which was being prepared.

However, it announced yesterday (Wednesday 13) that owing to concerns about the stage of the development of the project, and perceived delivery risks, it would not be providing the funding requested.

GCR's Managing Director Michael Gough said: "We were genuinely astonished to hear the news about the HLF's decision on our round two funding and I have to question their rationale. Since joining the GCR, in July of this year, I have been highly impressed by the support that the project had from the City Mayor and his team and I was confident that the strength of our combined proposal would be a winning solution.

"Our proposal to HLF Nottingham consisted of, as requested by them in October 2017, a comprehensive strategy and action plan from the city council, and a detailed business plan from the railway. Taken together this provided an approach that had almost zero risk.

"We will now explore a number of alternative plans. In the meantime, I can't help but feel hurt that Leicester appears to have been overlooked yet again."

Leicester's City Mayor Sir Peter Soulsby said: "We are obviously very disappointed, but this is not the end of the project. We remain committed to it, and the challenge now is for us to find a Plan B and an alternative source of finance.

"The project has been enormously strengthened since the first submission was made, and with the city council's experience of managing such projects this would be a very low-risk for the HLF. It has the potential to be of great economic benefit to the city and the region and I can only imagine that the HLF is over-committed elsewhere and needs to claw this money back for other projects."

Since 2011 Leicester has been awarded just over £9 million from the HLF, compared to £25.5 million to Nottingham, almost £18 million to Lincoln and just over £13 million to Derby.

The Main Line project is a partnership between the Great Central Railway, the National Railway Museum and Leicester City Council. Located alongside the Leicester North terminus of GCR, just off Red Hill Circle, the visitor attraction was due to open in 2021.