

Early Christmas present from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Charles Dickens Museum



## ***Press Release***

***Embargoed until 00.01hours on Saturday 20 November 2010***

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## ***Great Expectations at the Charles Dickens Museum***

The Charles Dickens Museum has secured funding of £2m from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for *Great Expectations*, a major redevelopment project to radically change and increase display areas and improve the overall visitor experience at the Museum in Doughty Street, London, for the bicentenary of Dickens's birth in 2012.

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund, said: "This museum is a real 'gem' in the heart of London; a small place that packs a big punch. The £2m investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund will help radically transform not just the building itself but the way people experience and learn about this internationally-revered literary master. We are particularly delighted that the museum is so determined to see the work completed by 2012 so enabling it to celebrate Dickens's bicentenary in true style."

The project will increase space for the interpretation and housing of the collections by 100%, introducing state-of-the-art facilities to preserve the collections for the enjoyment of future generations. In the adjacent property, which is owned by the Museum, a new visitor centre with study facilities and teaching rooms for the National Dickens Library and Archive will be created. The architectural fabric of the building will be carefully restored and repaired giving easier access to the building and recreating the original atmosphere of Dickens's home. The project also promotes Dickens's cultural and social legacy through a comprehensive activity programme to mark the bicentenary of the author's birth in 2012.

Novelist Philip Pullman commented on the award: "Of course the nation needs a Dickens Museum. We need to remind people of what a treasure we have in his work and how lucky we are to have him still alive in his books!"

The Museum has to raise a further £900,000 to match the HLF grant before *Great Expectations* can be implemented. Dr Florian Schweizer, Director of the Charles Dickens Museum, said: "The Heritage Lottery Fund grant boosts our fundraising ambitions significantly. Raising £900,000 in these Hard Times is a challenge, but we are confident that we will be able to achieve this with the aid of trusts and foundations, and with the support of the public. Charles Dickens has given so much to this country and to readers around the world; we hope that everyone whose life has been enriched by his stories will support our bicentenary campaign so that the Museum can be re-opened to the public on 7 February 2012, Dickens's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday." Philip Pullman said: "The Dickens Museum exists to preserve Dickens's legacy. It deserves the support of the nation."

The Museum's development scheme is one of the most significant legacy projects for the Dickens bicentenary. As a hub of the global *Dickens 2012* plans, the Museum is working in

partnership with more than 40 national and international partners to celebrate Dickens's heritage in a contemporary context and to demonstrate that Dickens's work and social legacy are very much still alive.

David Wootton, Chair of the Charles Dickens Museum, said: "I am delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has approved our bid. Our *Great Expectations* project will transform the Charles Dickens Museum and will enable us to achieve our vision of establishing the Museum as the world's most accessible centre for the enjoyment and understanding of Dickens and his legacy, and to do so in time to celebrate the bicentenary of his birth in 2012."

Dickens Biographer and patron of the museum Claire Tomalin commented on the award: "The Charles Dickens Museum is doubly important because it contains the finest collection of Dickens material in the country, and it is also the house in which Dickens lived for nearly three years as a young man making his name. How lucky we are to have such a place to remember him and learn about him."

– ENDS –

***For further information, please contact***

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Notes to editors:

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK. Website: [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk). For more information, please contact Katie Owen or Laura Bates, HLF Press Office, on 020 7591 6036/6027 out of office mobile: 07973 613820.

### **The Charles Dickens Museum**

The Charles Dickens Museum in London is the world's most important collection of material relating to the great Victorian novelist and social commentator. The only surviving London home of Dickens (from 1837 until 1839) was opened as a Museum in 1925 and is still welcoming visitors from all over the world in an authentic and inspiring surrounding. On four floors, visitors can see paintings, rare editions, manuscripts, original furniture and many items relating to the life of one of the most popular and beloved personalities of the Victorian age.

48 Doughty Street, London WC1N 2LX, 020 7405 2127, [www.dickensmuseum.com](http://www.dickensmuseum.com)

Registered charity 212172, Open daily 10am – 5pm

**The Museum is open on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day in 2010.**