

Women's Hall project celebrating East End suffragettes receives Heritage Lottery Fund support

100 years after UK women first won the right to vote, an exciting project in Tower Hamlets supported by a £100,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund will celebrate the little-known history of the radical East London Federation of the Suffragettes (ELFS).

Developed by Four Corners, Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, East End Women's Museum and Women's History Month in East London, The Women's Hall project will run from March to December 2018 and include two major exhibitions, a volunteering programme and public programme of talks, events and workshops.

The project's name is inspired by the Women's Hall at 400 Old Ford Road in Bow, the headquarters of the ELFS from 1914 to 1924, and home of their leader Sylvia Pankhurst and her friend, suffragette and photographer Norah Smyth. Run largely by and for local working class women, the Hall was at the heart of the community's response to sudden unemployment and rising food prices caused by the outbreak of the First World War, housing a 'Cost Price Restaurant' where people could get a hot meal at a very low price and free milk for their children.

The project launches through Women's History Month in East London in March 2018, inviting local organisations, libraries, venues and women's groups to explore and celebrate the heritage. There is a drop-in event for anyone interested in finding out more at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives on Thursday 15 March, 4.00pm– 8.00pm.

Carla Mitchell, Development Director at Four Corners said: "The East London Federation of the Suffragettes were a remarkable group of women, but their story is little known. As the centenary of women's right to vote is celebrated nationally we aim to help East End communities discover the amazing suffrage stories on their doorstep."

Mayor of Tower Hamlets, John Biggs said: "We can rightly be very proud of the role Tower Hamlets and the wider East End played in the suffragette movement. I look forward to joining visitors from across

the borough and beyond at these fantastic events. I am particularly proud that the Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives team will be bringing history to life with their community kitchen and crèche initiatives – it is the sort of activity that I’m sure the East London Federation of the Suffragettes would have been fully supportive of. I am also clear that as a council and community we need to restate, revisit and refresh our commitment to gender equality. This centenary will offer a clear opportunity not only for us to look backwards, but to look forwards too.”

Stuart Hoble, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: “We’re delighted to support this timely project, which will reveal a significant but untold dimension of suffragette history. Thanks to National Lottery players, the legacy of these extraordinary and community-spirited women will be celebrated through a programme of activities, so we can all learn this both locally and important heritage for the first time.”

Notes to editors

Women’s Hall project activities will explore and celebrate the heritage of the East London suffragettes throughout 2018 through:

- *The Women’s Hall* exhibition (Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives, 29 May-20 October 2018) will evoke the interior of the original Women’s Hall. Visitors will be able to learn about the ELFS and the First World War in the East End, view original materials, handle replicas, and attend events and workshops. A pop up community kitchen will serve hot meals for the public at set times throughout the exhibition’s run, and a crèche facility will be available one day per week.
- *East End Suffragettes: the photography of Norah Smyth* (Four Corners Gallery, 26 October-26 January 2019), a unique exhibition of Norah Smyth’s photographs which provide an intimate documentation of the ELFS’ activities, accompanied by gallery talks and local history walks that explore Norah’s story and the work of the East End suffragettes in more depth.
- The regular ELFS stall at Roman Road Market will be recreated on Saturday 16 June 2018, sharing local suffragette stories with shoppers.
- A new ‘Suffrage in the East End’ Education Pack will be created for all Tower Hamlets schools, and newly digitized archive materials will be made available to the public at Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives.
- A Photography workshop for mothers will run at Four Corners in Summer 2018, leading to a final exhibition in autumn 2018.
- 20+ local volunteers will gain skills in archival research and digitisation, heritage interpretation and curation, public speaking, photography and darkroom practice, events production and customer support.

About the project partners

Four Corners

Four Corners is a creative centre for film and photography, committed to promoting community-wide participation for over 40 years. Its programme seeks to support projects that engage with social and cultural themes, and open up perspectives for audiences, particularly in East London.

<http://www.fourcornersfilm.co.uk/>

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives

Tower Hamlets Local History Library & Archives covers the area of the present-day London borough of Tower Hamlets - the original East End of London which, until 1965, comprised of the boroughs of Bethnal Green, Poplar and Stepney. <http://www.ideastore.co.uk/local-history>

East End Women's Museum

The East End Women's Museum is a public history project aiming to record, share, and celebrate women's stories and voices from east London's history. The project was established in 2015 in response to the 'Jack the Ripper Museum', as a positive, sustainable protest. Find out more at

www.eastendwomensmuseum.org

Women's History Month in East London

Running 1 – 31 March, Women's History Month 2018 will celebrate women artists, activists, writers and performers, the Suffragette movement and winning the right to vote for some women in 1918 and all women over 21 in 1928 with exhibitions and events across East London. info@alternativearts.co.uk

www.alternativearts.co.uk

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 Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #HLFsupported.

About women's suffrage

In February 1918 the Representation of the People Act enfranchised women over 30, subject to a small property qualification, extending the right to vote to 8.4 million women in the UK. However, this only represented around 40 per cent of the total population of women in the UK. In July 1928 the Equal Franchise Act finally gave equal voting rights to women and men at the age of 21.

Further information

For further information, images and interviews please contact Sarah Jackson at eastendwomensmuseum@gmail.com or 07890561976