

# news release

16<sup>th</sup> September 2005

## **LHI SUPPORTS COMMUNITY MOSAIC RECALLING THE THRILL OF THE RACE**

A voluntary community project to make a large mosaic depicting roman chariot racing has been launched by the Colchester Archaeological Trust. The mosaic which will be displayed at the site of the recently discovered Roman chariot racing circus at Abbeyfields is being supported with a £ 14,850 grant supplied by the Local Heritage Initiative – a partnership between the Heritage Lottery fund, the Nationwide Building Society and the Countryside Agency.

“This is exactly the sort of project the Local Heritage Initiative likes to support,” said spokesman William Wall. “It will involve a cross section of the community coming together to create an exciting piece of work to celebrate local history. We are therefore delighted to be involved with this worthwhile project which will help to bring Roman chariot racing to life and give visitors to Abbeyfields a flavour of the thrill and drama of the chariot racing circus.”

The mosaic which has been designed by East Anglian artist Peter Froste will measure 20ft by 10ft when completed and is being constructed at the Philip Morant School and College in Colchester. Children aged between 9 and 16 from the school and also from Gosbecks Primary school will be responsible for laying the Tesseræ or tiles according to Peter’s design. Local mosaic artist Anne Schwegmann-Fielding will be providing the children with tuition on mosaic construction.

“The mosaic will be constructed in the roman style and will depict horses, chariots and charioteers in the midst of a dramatic race,” says Voluntary Project Manager Peter Herring. “We hope that there will be many members of the community who will want to become involved in helping to create this exciting mosaic and we would be delighted to hear from anyone willing to volunteer their time to the project.”

The voluntary project is being supported by the Colchester Archaeological Trust, Abbeyfields developers the Taylor Woodrow Group, Colchester Museum Services, and also has the backing of a number of celebrity names including Bill Wyman, Rolf Harris and Tony Robinson whose programme Time Team has already featured the circus. He sent the following supportive message;

“As an Essex man, I’m particularly pleased that such a rare find, unique in the British Isles, has been discovered in Colchester. And what better way to celebrate it than to get young people involved in creating a monument to it. Let’s hope the Colchester Circus lives as long in people’s memories as the story of that other Colchester icon, Queen Boudicca, the nemesis of the Romans in Britain.”

ENDS

**Issued by Kendalls on behalf of the Local Heritage Initiative**

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## **Notes to editors:**

1. The Local Heritage Initiative was devised and is administered by the Countryside Agency. LHI distributes funds on behalf of the Heritage Lottery Fund. To date LHI has awarded over £18 million to over 1200 projects in urban and rural England. The focus is on encouraging communities in England to take practical action to care for their local heritage. Further information on the Local Heritage Initiative can be found at [www.lhi.org.uk](http://www.lhi.org.uk)
  2. Following publication of the draft Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill in February, English Nature, the Rural Development Service and the Countryside Agency's Landscape, Access and Recreation division are working towards integration as a single body: Natural England. It will work for people, places and nature with responsibility for enhancing biodiversity, landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas; promoting access, recreation and public wellbeing, and contributing to the way natural resources are managed – so they can be enjoyed now and for future generations. The Countryside Agency's Landscape, Access and Recreation division aims to help everyone respect, protect and enjoy the countryside – protecting natural landscapes; and encouraging access to, enjoyment of and sustainable management and use of the countryside.
  3. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) enables communities to celebrate, look after and learn more about our diverse heritage. From our great museums and historic buildings to local parks and beauty spots or recording and celebrating traditions, customs and history, HLF grants open up our nation's heritage for everyone to enjoy. Since 1994 we have supported more than 16,000 projects, allocating over £3.3 billion across the UK; see [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)
  4. Nationwide, the world's largest building society, provides additional sponsorship support to the Local Heritage Initiative. The society has over 10 million customers and it is estimated around one in three households in the UK has a financial relationship with it. Through sponsorship, fundraising and other activities, Nationwide has supported hundreds of events and initiatives across the country.
  5. LHI is still looking to fund good quality community heritage projects, so there is still time to submit an application. It may be able to offer advice and help with technical issues or community involvement so early contact with a Countryside Agency regional office is advised.
- The Countryside Agency will continue to make grant aid payments to honour any new and existing grant offers made. Any projects expected to continue after formal closure of the programme will have their grants paid directly by HLF.