

PRESS RELEASE

Wednesday 13 January 2010
For immediate release



Coming of Age: 21 years of Mela in the UK

Bradford and Nottingham Melas have received Heritage Lottery Funding to produce an exhibition and book capturing the diversity and experiences of the past 21 years of Mela festivals in the UK.

This year is an important year for both Bradford and Nottingham Melas as they celebrate their 21st Anniversary. In recognition of this important milestone the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded £48,600 for a special project to capture the history of the two Melas through oral history and archives. The project will result in a touring photographic exhibition together with a 'coffee table' book which will provide a retrospective look at the last 21 years of the Mela and its roots and progress in the UK.

The Nottingham Mela started the Mela revolution in spectacular style in July 1988, with a line up of international and national artists, including the likes of Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Malkit Singh. Nottingham Mela evolved over the years as a leading national player in terms of innovation and its connection with wider societal and cultural issues facing the south Asian UK community. Apna Arts, the organisation behind the Nottingham Mela, went on and succeeded in attracting £5.5 million capital funding towards a new flagship contemporary art centre (New Art Exchange) celebrating cultural diversity and the arts in modern Britain.

Councillor Dave Trimble, Nottingham City Council's Portfolio holder for Leisure, Culture and Community, said: *"After 21 years the Mela in Nottingham is embedded as part of the city's cultural heritage, connecting all communities in so many rich and colourful ways. We are delighted that this heritage project will now tell a pioneering story for the nation to hear, learn and connect with."*

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What began in Bradford in September 1988 as a small gathering on a football pitch in the Great Horton area of the city has now grown into a two-day international celebration which attracts around 200,000 visitors. The Bradford Mela is recognised around the world as the most pioneering and ambitious Mela in the UK.

Councillor Anne Hawkesworth, Bradford Council's Executive Member for Environment and Culture, said:

"This funding will allow us to share the traditions and diversity of the Mela and also preserve the heritage and personal stories relating to Bradford Mela through this 21st anniversary book and exhibition. Bradford Mela has gone from strength to strength over the years celebrating the diversity of our city and district. This project will record and acknowledge that success and I am delighted that the HLF is supporting it."

The exhibition and book will tell the story of these pioneering Melas and the very different journeys both Melas have taken in their 21 years.

Celebrating the city's cultural heritage in general and its Asian communities in particular, both Melas have also provided the inspiration for many other towns and cities to organise similar events. Melas are now an established feature of the summer calendar all over the UK.

Fiona Spiers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund, Yorkshire and the Humber and Desmond Gallagher, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund, East Midlands said: *"The Mela has played a vital role in both Bradford and Nottingham's lively and varied history. This project will preserve this unique heritage by capturing stories and memories, letting everyone get involved and share experiences of these national events."*

The British Mela is a relatively new emerging art form that is being constantly redefined and developed in new directions. Both Bradford and Nottingham Mela have been pivotal in this process of definition. The exhibition and book will help further clarify the important role the Mela has in the strengthening the UK's cultural heritage, and also mark a point of reflection and visioning for the future.

- Ends -

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Notes to Editors:

- The launch of the exhibition and book will take place at New Art Exchange, Nottingham, on **Friday 28th May 2010, 6-8pm**
- The exhibition will be open to the general public at New Art Exchange from **29th May to 3rd July 2010**, opening times: Monday to Friday 10am to 7pm, Saturday 10am to 5pm.
- The touring exhibition is produced and promoted by Bradford and Nottingham Mela in partnership with New Art Exchange

For further information, images or to set up an interview please contact Mandeep Samra, Project Manager, on 07793 047220 or via mandysamra@hotmail.com

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 more than 28,800 projects, allocating over £4.3 billion across the UK. Website: www.hlf.org.uk