DURHAM MINERS' HERITAGE COULD SOON WIN WORLDWIDE RECOGNITION.

Monday 1 August, 2022

Redhills, the miners' hall in Durham, may be among only the 900 global sites of UNESCO world heritage status.

They include the Pyramids and the Taj Mahal.

And, if a bid by an international consortium is successful, it could mean that Durham City becomes one of the few places to have two World Heritage sites.

Durham Cathedral and Castle already hold UNESCO status.

Redhills has been selected as one of eight ‘workers assembly halls’ to be put forward for the prestigious UNESCO world heritage status.

These buildings had the common goals of community, welfare and democracy and to preserve this unique heritage and provide a source of reflection for future generations in shaping their world.

The consortium includes similar halls in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Finland and Canada.

The Workers Museum in Copenhagen is spearheading the bid and hopes that UNESCO will consider it in 2024.

There were originally 74 applications to join the group, and it is a testimony to the importance of the Durham miners’ history, heritage and culture that it has been chosen to be among those who represent the best in the world.

Durham Miners Hall, known as Redhills, opened in Durham City in 1915. It was paid for by two hundred thousand working miners, the hall was a democratic hub and the heart of the Durham Coalfield. From Redhills, collective decisions were made, transforming the cultural and social fabric of County Durham; homes for aged miners were commissioned, healthcare for sick and injured miners provided, and welfare halls and reading rooms were built. It provided these services to the people of the coalfield a generation before the national welfare state was established.

Redhills is Grade II listed, with its ‘Pitman's Parliament’ named by Historic England as one of its '100 irreplaceable places. It is ranked alongside the Palace of Westminster as one of the country's top ten landmarks in England's power, protest and progress history.

Redhills charity CEO Nick Malyan said: “To be considered for UNESCO World Heritage recognition is a demonstration of the international significance of Redhills. The Miners’ Hall embodies English working-class democracy, telling a powerful story of struggle and collective achievement. While the nomination and judging process will take time we welcome the opportunity to ensure the Durham coalfield’s story is heard on the global stage it deserves.”

The charity has teamed up with Durham University’s Prof Robin Coningham to progress the UK leg of the bid. Prof Coningham, holder of UNESCO’s 2014 Chair on Archaeological Ethics and Practice in Cultural Heritage, said: “Redhills and all it stands for is hugely significant. The Durham miners were social reformers on a scale rarely seen across the world.

Their memory and achievements should be recognised as being of world heritage status. It will be a privilege to work with the Redhills team to bring this to reality.”

As the project develops, a steering group for the local community will be formed; anyone interested in joining can sign up for project updates at https://redhillsdurham.org/signup/

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Company Contact:

Redhills CIO

T. 01913868413
E. admin@redhillsdurham.org
W. https://redhillsdurham.org

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