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## **SCHOOL LESSONS ON SLAVERY BROUGHT TO LIFE FOR CHILDREN THANKS TO MUSEUM FUNDING**

SCHOOLCHILDREN will have history lessons on slavery brought to life thanks to a project to send artefacts out of a museum and into the classroom. The news comes on the day that Education Secretary Alan Johnson announced that Britain's role in the slave trade would be made compulsory as part of history lessons in secondary schools.

To mark the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in 2007, secondary schools will be able to borrow one of a series of Slavery Handling Boxes filled with artefacts and images for pupils to handle and discuss during lessons on slavery and abolition.

The boxes will contain original and replica artefacts, such as a Wedgwood china plate and Abolitionist coins bought by the English public as symbols of their allegiance to the Abolitionist cause, as well as artefacts representing the struggle by enslaved Africans in the Caribbean to overcome their oppression.

The project is part of an educational programme supporting a major two-year exhibition, *Breaking the Chains*, at the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum in Bristol to mark the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade.

More than £100,000 has been donated by organisations including the Linbury Trust, Ernest Cook Trust, Heritage Lottery Fund and Bristol's Society of Merchant Venturers to fund education projects in support of the exhibition.

Teacher training days will also be organised at the *Breaking the Chains* exhibition, which opens on the 23rd April, 2007, to equip teachers with the knowledge and materials to cover the abolition of the slave trade in school lessons. Dr Gareth Griffiths, Director of the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, said the aim was to give teachers the right

information and skills to take back to their schools and teach children about the abolitionist movement.

He said: "Because slavery can be a controversial subject, particularly when discussing whether people today should apologise, it is often avoided in the curriculum. I think the government is right to make it compulsory in history lessons. Pupils find it fascinating once they realise that the abolitionist movement was the forerunner to mass campaigning activities today such as Live Aid. The abolitionists were the first people to campaign for something on purely humanitarian grounds, where they had nothing to gain personally, and those values have been carried forward to many charity campaigns today."

The education funding will also be used to support school visits to the exhibition and create teaching materials for use post-visit.

*Breaking the Chains* is being developed in partnership with Bristol City Council's Museums, Galleries and Archives Service and is supported by a £770,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The entire third floor of the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum will be devoted the exhibition, where vivid displays will tell the shocking and brutal story of Britain's involvement in the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It will pay tribute both to the courage and resilience of those who were enslaved, and the tireless campaigning of ordinary British people in bringing legally sanctioned slavery to an end. The exhibition will also focus on how forms of slavery continue in the present day.

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Notes to editors

For more details and images please contact Feisal Khalif on 0117 925 4980 x 204, feisal.khalif@empiremuseum.co.uk; or Lucy Edwards on 0117 925 4980 x 230, lucy.edwards@empiremuseum.co.uk

British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, Clock Tower Yard,  
Temple Meads, Bristol BS1 6QH  
[www.empiremuseum.co.uk](http://www.empiremuseum.co.uk)