Government funding of £13 million has been confirmed and projects agreed for nine historic high streets across Yorkshire, including Selby.

Selby District Council has been awarded £500,000 for the Selby High Street Heritage Action Zone. Over the last year the lead partners in each high street project have been working up the details of their High Street projects. Delivered through Historic England’s High Streets Heritage Action Zone programme, these will breathe new life into historic high streets across the region. They will bring physical improvements and cultural activities to regenerate and restore local historic character.

Many high streets are under pressure following the Covid-19 pandemic and as more people choose to shop at out-of-town retail parks or online, forcing high street businesses to close down and buildings to become vacant. The special character of our historic high streets, which is so important to the local identity of our villages, towns and cities, is suffering.

The High Streets Heritage Action Zone initiative in England is funded with £40 million from the Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport’s Heritage High Street Fund and £52 million from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government’s Future High Street Fund. £3 million will be provided by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to support a cultural programme.

Selby’s town centre is stuffed full of historic buildings, which variously reflect its past importance as a centre for shipbuilding, trade, agriculture and mining.  At its heart is the Grade I-listed Norman Abbey, which still survives today. The town is now a popular commuter town with a fast rail link to Leeds.

The High Street Heritage Action Zone, led by Selby District Council, will fund projects to develop, enhance and celebrate parts of the town centre’s historic environment to help make it more attractive for locals to use, particularly to younger people.

Charles Smith, Acting Regional Director for Historic England in the North East and Yorkshire said: “Our high streets bring people together. They are places to socialise, shop, run businesses and be part of our local community. When high streets suffer, as they have done in particular over the past six months, the special character of our historic places and communities suffers too. With the funding from the Government, combined with the expertise and passion of local people, Selby District Council and Historic England, the future of Selby’s historic high street is, thankfully, looking brighter.”

Selby District Council’s Lead member for Communities and Economic Development,  Cllr David Buckle, added, “What an opportunity to invest in supporting our historic town centre.  Supporting this bid has been part of the District Council’s work to help our local businesses through challenging times for the high street. It goes hand-in-hand with other work, such as the redevelopment of the area around Selby station.

“In a recent national survey, Selby has been recognised as the best place to live in the north of England and our quality of life is an important part of this.  That’s why we’re committed to continue to use our position to help draw in funding and support for our town centres.”

Communications