

Museum to close as council confirms new era for glass

IT'S the end of an era for a world famous Kingswinford museum but the start of a sparkling new future for the borough's prized glass collection.

Broadfield House Glass Museum is to close at the end of next month, Dudley Council has confirmed, and the borough's internationally important glass collection is to be transferred to the British Glass Foundation which has been working with Complex Development Projects Ltd to bring to fruition a new £5.5m state-of-the-art glass museum in Camp Hill, Wordsley.

Work has been underway for some months on the old Stuart Crystal glassworks site after planning permission was awarded last autumn but the project can now move forward at a pace after a £2.13million grant from the European Regional Development Fund was confirmed this week.

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Council bosses say efforts to transfer the borough's glass treasures from the authority's care on a 125-year lease to the British Glass Foundation are now getting underway and the cataloguing and preparing of the delicate pieces, many of which are priceless, will take up to nine months.

The new museum, which will be based opposite the historic Red House Glass Cone, will showcase the borough's glass collection in a more accessible and visitor-friendly way than is possible at Broadfield and the development will involve sympathetic restoration of the listed former Stuart Glass



Work is underway to create the new museum on the White House Cone site in Wordsley



World famous Broadfield House Glass Museum in Kingswinford

Works and preservation of the remains of the old White House Glass Cone, which is classed as an ancient monument.

It is hoped the new multi-million pound facility, which will feature an iconic glass frontage, will become a world class visitor attraction.

The development will also include an open courtyard, canal-side restaurant/cafe, office space for new business start-ups and 18 one and two-bedroom loft apartments.

Developer Ian Harrabin, of Complex Development Projects Ltd, said the listed buildings on the site had been "pulled back from the brink" after repeated vandalism attacks but work was now "really cracking on" and should be completed by

basic standard by Christmas. He added: "We've got a fantastic mixed use project with the museum, offices and the flats all together. It will be something very special."

Councillor Khurshid Ahmed, Dudley's cabinet member for planning and economic development, said: "This new museum will not only act to preserve a historic building but will also make a great addition to the borough's tourism and cultural offer by showing off our glass collection in a purpose-built facility which will be fully accessible."

"We are delighted to have received the offer of European funding as without this the new museum project would not have happened."

man of the British Glass Foundation, said: "We are delighted to have received the offer of ERDF funding for a brand new glass museum, which will eventually house the borough's stunning glass collection."

"With its long history of glassmaking and being opposite the Red House Glass Cone this site is the perfect location for the new museum."

"We have been working very closely with the developer, Complex Development Projects Ltd, and Dudley Council over the last few years to make this happen and we are pleased European money is coming into Dudley which will benefit the local community and boost tourism."

Broadfield House, which has been home to the borough's glass collection since 1980, will close its doors to the public at the end of September so the collection is ready to be installed in the new museum in autumn 2016.

During this time the glass will not be available to view but many pieces can be seen online.

Proceeds from the sale of the Compton Drive museum will form part of the council's contribution towards the costs of the new museum, which will be run by the British Glass Foundation.

Cllr Ahmed said Dudley Council would "continue to work closely with the BGF once they take over the run-