# Astley Castle to be saved thanks to Heritage Lottery Fund

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Dating back to the 1200s and tragically devastated by fire in 1978, Astley Castle in North Warwickshire is now celebrating and looking forward to a safe, bright and exciting future thanks to a confirmed grant of £1.47million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), it was announced today.

Following emergency works to stabilise the building in October last year, the Landmark Trust will now be able to fully put into action their plans to conserve the existing fabric of the castle. In a severe state of disrepair English Heritage has marked the building as one of the 16 most at risk in England.

Often laying claim to being owned by three Queens of England Astley Castle will benefit from a total spend of just over £2.3million giving it a new lease of life as Landmark Trust accommodation with a new build inside the castle walls. Through this project the castle will be open to the public.

Phase I has involved the clearance of fallen rubble, carefully taking down areas that cannot be saved and the consolidation of what is salvageable. For the first time in years, the castle has been carefully analysed and former doors, windows and hearths have been revealed. It has been discovered that more of the central spine wall can be saved than expected and some of vice tower can also be salvaged.

Peter Pearce, Director of the Landmark Trust, said: “Such discoveries at Astley Castle will require the architectural scheme to evolve gently to take account of them, and our team of surveyors, structural engineer, quantity surveyor, archaeologist and project manager have been working with the architects to achieve solutions that mesh best practice in conservation with the vision for the new build. We are delighted that we now have the go ahead from HLF to carry out this work and save as much as we can of this national treasure. We need to raise another £134,000 to complete the fundraising.”

The creation of a new structure within Astley Castle will allow the building to be used and enjoyed once again so that it never again falls into disrepair. In addition to the conservation of the remaining fabric of the building, new links and signage will run through the surrounding parkland.

The restored castle will also provide many opportunities for people to visit the site to learn more about the history of this important building. There will be information, guided tours and walks created, and local people will be offered volunteering and training opportunities to get involved throughout the duration of the project, in addition to a learning programme with local schools, and eight annual public open days with interpretation and special activities.

Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for the West Midlands, Anne Jenkins, said: “We are delighted that the Landmark Trust’s vision for Astley Castle will now become a reality. An important part of not only North Warwickshire’s heritage but that of the nation, it will now be saved for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.”

Phase II of the works will start in September 2009 with a completion date of spring 2011.

**Notes to editors**

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 £4.3billion across the UK, with over £300 million granted to projects in the West Midlands alone.

The Landmark Trust is a national building preservation charity which rescues and restores buildings at risk and makes them available to stay in and experience. There are over 180 Landmarks in the UK including castles, forts, follies and towers. www.landmarktrust.org.uk

**Astley Castle Facts**

- Astley Castle is often described as 'the home of three queens of England': Elizabeth Woodville, Elizabeth of York and Lady Jane Grey.
- The site is a Schedule Ancient Monument and the building is listed Grade II.  Astley Castle is on English Heritage's Buildings at Risk register with the highest level of risk.
- Astley Castle was the medieval seat of the Astleys and later owned by the Grey family, of which Lady Jane Grey was a member. A licence to crenellate was obtained in 1266.
- The structure that survives today has been much altered over the centuries resulting in a complicated building history. The Castle was extensively damaged by a fire in 1978 and it is now ruinous and largely unroofed.