Support for Bath Abbey's 21st century



Bath Abbey has received initial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a £10million bid for its Footprint project, a transformative programme of capital works, interpretation, collections care and sustainable energy. Development funding of £389,000 has also been awarded to help progress plans to secure a full grant at a later date.

The £19.3m Footprint project aims to carry out essential repairs to the abbey's collapsing floor, install a new eco-friendly heating system using Bath's unique hot springs as a source of energy and enlarge capacity by creating 200 sq metres of new facilities to fulfil the abbey as a place of congregation, equal access and hospitality. A programme is also planned to record and interpret the abbey's 1,200 years of history and this iconic church for millions of visitors including educational visits.

Development funding of £390,000 has been awarded to help the abbey progress its plans to secure the full grant in 2015. The abbey is expected to use this to further develop its design plans and implement its interpretation programme which will then unlock the full award of £10 million.

The abbey thanked its congregation, the local community and stakeholders who have worked so hard in supporting the funding application.

Edward Mason, Rector of Bath Abbey, said: “We are all delighted to learn that we have secured initial support from HLF today. This is great news for the abbey as well as the city of Bath and everyone who has put so much time and effort into this. The abbey has been at the centre of the Bath community for over 1,200 years. Footprint will make the abbey fit for purpose and the changes will make it possible for current and future generations to use, understand and fully enjoy Bath Abbey. Thanks to the HLF, we are a huge step closer to achieving this.”

Laura Brown, Footprint Appeal Director, said: “We are thrilled to have the HLF’s support and are really grateful to everyone who has worked so hard to achieve this in a short space of time. The essential groundwork is already completed: we’ve been granted planning and listed building consent by B&NES and we’ve already seen £2million of investment, so together with the HLF’s support, we are in a very strong position. Now of course the really hard but potentially very exciting work starts. There are certainly big challenges ahead but the HLF’s decision is the best news we could have hoped for and makes the project a tangible reality.”

Nerys Watts, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South West, said: “The great medieval Bath Abbey has a rich history, and the innovative Footprint project will ensure that this special place can continue to play a vital role in the lives of the thousands of people who visit every year. Our initial support for the essential capital work plans, collections care and the use of sustainable energy will bring the abbey into the 21st century, enabling people from Bath and further afield to enjoy this special place for many more years to come.”

In order to unlock the full award of £10million from HLF, the abbey will need to raise around £7 million in additional funding through a combination of grant-making trusts and foundations, plus donations from individuals. A major public appeal will be launched later on this year.

Notes to editors

Initial support means the project meets HLF criteria for funding and HLF believes the project has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to secure a firm award.

About Bath Abbey

Bath Abbey is a flourishing Church of England parish church which technically serves a small city centre parish (Bath Abbey with St James). This parish has a small residential population and primarily consists of commercial properties; and most of the regular congregation and the 565 people on the electoral roll live in other parishes or come from outside the city of Bath. The abbey holds daily services of morning or evening prayer or Holy Communion; and the standard pattern of Sunday worship is for five daily services attended on average by 600 people. Special services at Advent, Christmas and Easter are well attended; and many local organisations hold annual services in the abbey. The Abbey has four choirs: Men’s, Boys’ and Girls’ choirs support worship in services; whilst Melody Makers is a choir for younger children which performs in concerts in the abbey once a term and at other events in and around Bath. The abbey runs a successful Schools Singing Programme, an outreach activity which supports singing within local schools and holds regular workshops and concerts in the abbey. The abbey welcomes approximately 400,000 visitors annually and is open daily all year round; many of these visitors being families and school parties. Apart from being a place of prayer, worship, weddings and funerals, the abbey has an important role as a visitor destination, a performance space (for audiences anywhere between 10 and 1,000), a general civic space and an exhibition space.

About the Footprint project

Bath Abbey Footprint is a transformative programme of capital works, interpretation, collections care and sustainable

energy, provoked by the urgent need to repair and renew the Abbey's collapsing historic floor. It aims to meet the worshipping needs of the community in this age and for years to come, and to develop the facilities to support and enhance the Abbey's service to the city.

The Footprint project will accomplish this by:

- Reducing Impact – stabilising the floor foundation, renewing its surface, and using the unique hot springs as a source of energy
- Enlarging Capacity - fulfilling the Abbey as a place of congregation, equal access and hospitality
- Retelling an Ancient Story - recording and interpreting the long history of the abbey site and this iconic church for millions of visitors
- Becoming a People and Place Fully Alive - supporting everyone in recognising what is valuable - individually, communally, and globally

Further information

For further details, interview requests and images please contact Elaine Teh or Katie McGill on 01225 422 462 or email: eteh@bathabbey.org or kmcgill@bathabbey.org