Lottery Funding for Monmouthshire Roman Links

12/09/2013

The £5,900 grant awarded to the Parish Church of St. Stephen and St. Tathan, Caerwent will enable the adaptation of the current church structure to include a visitor and hospitality area within the church and a multipurpose learning centre.

Jennifer Stewart, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Wales, announced the grant award and said, “Caerwent has remarkable Roman links and it is vital that this rich history and information about the church’s role in that history is accessible to the public. This grant will enable the Parish Church to broaden its public use which will increase usage of this important local building whilst also creating a permanent home for important interpretation tools and materials.”

Roman remains

The church is centred in the historically significant Roman city of Venta Silurum. The surviving city walls are maintained by Cadw and are considered to be the finest example in northern Europe. Extensive excavation works took place in the early twentieth century and more recently by Channel 4’s ‘Time Team’. However, interpretation of the church and its internationally significant Roman links and artefacts need to be made more accessible to visitors.

This grant will help the project bring together information about the church itself and Roman artefacts within the church, as well as permanently housing a collection of books and articles of local interest compiled by the Caerwent Historic Trust. Plans also include bringing the church into the digital age with the possible creation of a smartphone app. A website has already been created which will also be enhanced as a result of the grant.

Welcoming the announcement, local Assembly Member for Monmouthshire, Nick Ramsay AM said, “I am thrilled that Caerwent’s important heritage will now be safeguarded and placed on permanent display in the church. The town is home to some of the most impressive Roman monuments in Britain which should be proudly exhibited for tourists and local people alike and this funding will now ensure that this happens.”

Visitor area

The new visitor area within the church will house displays of artefacts unique to the church and will also offer refreshment and toilet facilities for visitors. The hope is that these improvements to the church will encourage broader public use of the building, making it a heritage interpretation centre as well as a place of worship.

Project co-ordinator, Jennifer Powell said, “The aim of this project is to ensure that our local heritage will be better explained for the public and that the promotion of historical and archaeological information will encourage school groups and visitors to learn about local heritage. We are already amazed at the number of visitors we have from abroad and hopefully changes will allow us to attract even greater numbers.”

Notes to editors

This £5,900 grant has been awarded by HLF to the Parish Church of St. Stephen and St. Tathan, Caerwent.

Plans for the project include:

- Conversion of the south aisle into a publicly accessible visitor area with a multipurpose learning centre and kitchenette
- Improved interpretation of the church's Roman artefacts
- New interpretation of the church and the adjacent Roman settlement.
- The Caerwent Historic Trust collection of books and articles will be deposited in the church for public use.
- Production of 500 copies of a new bilingual church guide book and workshop materials for school parties and a consultation with practicing educationalists in the research, content and design of this material.
- Installation of a WC in the tower

Further information

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