More than £15.7 million for England’s historic places of worship

17/02/2011

The grants were awarded under the organisations’ joint Repair Grants for Places of Worship scheme*.

Nationally, since 2002, almost £140 million of grants have been awarded for more than 1500 projects at Grade I and II historic places of worship through the joint scheme, which is the largest single source of funds to help congregations to care for historic churches, chapels, synagogues and other historic places of worship.

Despite the challenging economic climate, HLF and English Heritage have been able to maintain the planned level of funding and support for places of worship in the current financial year. The Heritage Lottery Fund has provided an extra £9 million to maintain the £25 million value of the total grants budget for 2010 – 11 (further funds will be offered to Grade II places of worship in March). HLF has also confirmed that it will continue its increased level of support in future years. This means that despite English Heritage having to withdraw most of its contribution for new awards from now on, the scheme can continue in its current form. There will be no reduction in expert advice English Heritage staff and local support officers give to congregations all over the country.

Places of worship getting grants for urgent repairs this year include:

- St Wilfrid’s, Halton in Leeds, an Arts and Crafts church built as recently as 1937-39, receiving £498,000 for repairs to roofs and windows
- St Michael and All Angels, Haworth in Yorkshire, the Brontë family’s church, receiving £115,000 towards reroofing the south nave, side aisle and tower
- Church of St Augustine in Ramsgate, Kent, a church designed by AWG Pugin receiving £110,000 for repairs to the roof, the chancel and electrics
- Church of St Catherine, Hoarwithy, Herefordshire, a rare example of a church built in the Italian Romanesque and semi-Byzantine style receiving £80,000 to repair the tower, stonework and floors.

Dr Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage, said; “Thanks to the generosity of the Heritage Lottery Fund, and ultimately therefore of Lottery players, our historic places of worship in direct need still have the vital safety net of the Repair Grants scheme. Without it, many brave but struggling congregations would be faced with watching their beloved churches and chapels falling into ruin. Instead, the combination of Heritage Lottery Fund money and English Heritage advice is seeing these wonderful buildings revived and restored and becoming ever more central to their communities as places of prayer and celebration and as a hub for local services.”

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of the HLF, said; “Historic places of worship are one of our most treasured cultural assets. They occupy a unique position at the heart of communities up and down the country, and are a focus for so many civil and social activities in addition to their central purpose as a place for prayer and contemplation. Places of worship are one of the most instantly recognisable features of our cultural landscape, and they continue to inspire people to get involved with and learn about their shared history. This is at the very core of what the Heritage Lottery Fund wants to achieve and the reason we have substantially increased our investment to the programme.”

Averil Kenyon, Honorary Treasurer at St Michael and All Angels, Haworth, said; “The church roof is leaking badly and that in turn is causing serious damage to 19th century wall paintings inside. Overall we will need about £240,000 to complete the project, which will be the first large scale repairs carried out on the roof since the 19th century. But getting this grant under our belts is a tremendous lift and will give us more leverage with other grant giving bodies. Today is a very good day for our historic church, which is visited by people from across the globe because of its Bronte connection. This grant from the HLF and English Heritage will go a long way in protecting it for future generations.”

Notes to editors

*** The Repair Grants for Places of Worship in England Scheme** is funded mostly by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and administered by English Heritage (EH) on behalf of both organisations.

The scheme, in a slightly different form, began in 1996. Before then it was difficult to secure funding on the scale required to help a place of worship facing closure or demolition because of high repair costs.

Listed places of worship in England of all denominations and faiths are eligible for grants which support urgent repairs to the fabric of the building with a focus on projects costing less than £250,000. There is a two-stage application process with development funding available at Stage One to help work up proposals.

The Listed Places of Worship grant scheme makes payments equivalent to the VAT incurred in making repairs to listed buildings primarily in use for public worship. In the 2009-10 financial year, 3,745 claims were paid UK-wide, with a total value of £14,963,412.67, giving an average grant of £3,996. Since last year’s Spending Review, works on clocks, pews, bells, organs and professional services such as architects’ fees are no longer eligible.

English Heritage is the Government’s statutory advisor on the historic environment. We provide advice on how best to conserve England’s heritage for the benefit of everyone. While most of England’s heritage is in private hands, we work with all who come into contact with it - landowners, businesses, planners and developers, national, regional and local government, the Third Sector, local communities and the general public - to help them understand, value, care for and enjoy England’s historic environment.

We are also entrusted with the custodianship of over 400 sites and monuments which together form the national collection of built and archaeological heritage. These include some of the most important monuments of human history such as Stonehenge and Hadrian’s Wall. www.english-heritage.org.uk

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 30,000 projects, allocating £4.5billion across the UK.

Since 1994, HLF have awarded over £378million to projects that have conserved the built fabric of more than 3,300 places of worship and other religious monuments, including over 2,500 listed buildings

Have your say on HLF’s 2013–2019 strategy - a three-month consultation on the future of Lottery funding for heritage.

Views given will help shape HLF’s strategy from 2013 to 2019. Within the consultation, HLF sets out proposals on a wide range of key heritage issues. This is people’s chance to tell us what they think our priorities should be, what we should continue to do, and what we should do differently.

Between 2013 - 2019, HLF expects to have a significantly increased annual awards budget of around £300million, as a result of an increased share of Lottery good cause income for heritage. The consultation runs until 26 April 2011.

To respond to the consultation.

Have you seen the little red book?
Last June English Heritage sent a free copy of a booklet entitled Caring for Places of Worship to every listed place of worship in the country. Copies were sent to the person responsible for arranging the building's insurance and they were urged to pass them on and share them with the congregation. Have you seen this red A5 sized booklet?

Free copy of Caring for Places of Worship.

Further information:

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