Lottery backing to address urgent repairs to South East historic places of worship

13/08/2013

Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) announced £1.2million of Lottery funding to help secure the future of 12 of the South East's most historic places of worship.

This vital money is helping congregations address a back log of urgent repairs to listed churches and chapels at risk across the South East including St Michael in Lewes, East Sussex; St Peter and St Paul in Upper Stoke, Kent; the Church of St Paul, Shanklin on the Isle of Wight; and St Mary's in Headley near Epsom, Surrey.

St Mary the Virgin in Stone-next-Dartford, Kent is amongst the first of 35 churches across the UK to be awarded a grant through HLF's new Grants for Places of Worship programme.

Launched in March, it supercedes the Repair Grants for Places of Worship scheme. In addition to providing money for urgent repairs, the programme is now also funding new works that support and encourage greater community use and engagement, helping to increase the number of people who take an active interest in these historic buildings and who will care for them in the future. As well as much needed conservation work, today's grants will support the provision of new toilets and kitchens; create historical exhibitions, leaflets and guide books; commission skills training for volunteer tour guides; and develop digital marketing tools including websites and web-based tools such as apps.

Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East, said: "There is a place of worship in almost every ward, village and town across the South East of England, providing a very powerful visual connection with our past. Not only will our awards secure the immediate future of these particular buildings, it will also empower congregations to adapt them, where necessary, so they can be enjoyed more widely throughout the community and in turn enable them be more sustainable for the future."

Dr Andy Brown, Planning and Conservation Director for the South East at English Heritage, which provides expert advice for the programme, said: "I applaud the HLF's continuing commitment to our historic places of worship. These funds will help all twelve beneficiaries remain viable buildings reflecting our past and contributing to our future. There is so much more to this project than just making the physical structures safe and sound. By providing money for visitor facilities, exhibitions, books and tour guides, the grants are going to help the public enjoy and appreciate these buildings. This is a vital part of keeping our heritage alive."

Grants for Places of Worship announced today include:

St Mary the Virgin, Stone-next-Dartford, Kent
St. Mary the Virgin is a Grade I listed church. Built in the mid-13th century by the masons responsible for the work at Westminster Abbey, the similarly carved design and decorative architectural detail has led it to be dubbed 'Little Westminster'. This grant of £135,800 will enable vital repairs to keep the fabric of the building water tight, remedy localised subsidence and install a heating system in the chancel. In addition, this grant will fund the repair and expansion of the current hearing loop system and fund the production leaflets and web content on the history of the church and its architecture.

St Matthew’s, Blackmoor, Hampshire
St Matthew’s is Grade II* listed and was designed by Alfred Waterhouse, champion of Victorian Gothic Revival architecture and who was responsible for the design of the National History Museum. This grant of £143,400 will enable urgent repairs to address drainage, a leaking roof and defective rainwater goods.

Other grants awarded through Grants for Places of Worship scheme and announced today include:

- St Michael in Lewes, Lewes, East Sussex (grant £42,500)
- St Andrew’s Church, Gatton, Surrey (grant £612,000)
- St Peter’s, Petersfield, Hampshire (grant £34,400)
- St Peter and St Paul, Upper Stoke, Kent (grant £249,500)
- Holy Trinity Penton Mewsey, Andover, Hampshire (grant £80,300)
- St Mary’s, Headley near Epsom, Surrey (grant £89,800)

The remaining 4 grants announced today are from the final round to be awarded under Repair Grants for Places of Worship, a joint scheme funded by HLF with expert guidance from English Heritage:

- Church of St John Sub Castro, Lewes, East Sussex (grant £100,000)
- Billingshurst Unitarian Chapel, Billingshurst, Horsham, West Sussex (grant £75,000)
- Church of St Paul, Shanklin, Isle of Wight (grant £59,000)
- St Botolph;s Church, Heene, Worthing, West Sussex (£147,000)

Further information

HLF press office: Natasha Hughes on 020 7591 6143, out of office hours mobile: 07973 613 820.