Historic Places of Worship

18/02/2010

English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) today (Thursday 18 February) announced more than £15.7million to support urgent repair work to 154 Grade I and II listed places of worship across England. The grants were awarded under the organisations' joint Repair Grants for Places of Worship scheme.

Nationally, since 2002, £123million of grants have been awarded for more than 1,300 Grade I and some II* historic places of worship through the partnership 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.

This year, places of worship from a range of faiths and denominations will be able to implement repair and improvement programmes as a result of the grant scheme.

Places of worship set to benefit include; the Presbyterian Church of St Peter, West Liss, East Hampshire, The Prince's Road Synagogue in Liverpool, and the Christian Church of St George in Cullercoats, North Shields.

Dr Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage, said: "We are delighted with the continued success of this important national scheme which has helped to restore and preserve some of the country's most historic places of worship."

"Historic places of worship are at the heart of their communities. They give us beautiful public spaces where people can find peace or companionship, enjoy exhibitions and concerts or benefit from practical services such as post offices, shops, nurseries. We are thrilled to be working with the HLF to support over 150 of England's most significant places of worship as they are repaired for the use of our generation and the enjoyment of our children and grandchildren."

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of the Heritage Lottery Fund, said: "England's places of worship are a key part of our heritage but largely rely on the hard work and generosity of local communities and volunteers to keep them in good order. This money will help support the passion and commitment of those communities and safeguard these precious and important buildings."

Father Adrian Hughes, St George's Church in Cullercoats, said: "We are a very busy church, open daily both for worship and for the many visitors who come to see the fine example of the vaulted roof which was John Loughborough Pearson's signature work as an architect. Keeping the church in a good state of repair is a vital part of ensuring people continue to enjoy and appreciate the building. The local church community has been very active over the last 12 months with almost £50,000 raised in an effort to match the grant."

Notes to editors

Grants for repairs being made available to England's Grade II listed places of worship will be announced in May.

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

In 1996, an HLF scheme was set up in partnership with EH to fund the repair of places of worship of all faiths. 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 are eligible to apply for a grant under the Repair Grants for Places of Worship scheme. The programme supports urgent repairs to the fabric of listed places of worship and priority is given to single repair 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.

English Heritage is the Government's advisor for the historic environment. We provide advice on how best to conserve England's heritage for the benefit of everyone. Most of England's heritage is in private hands. We work with landowners, commerce and industry, planners and developers, national, regional and local government, the Third Sector and local communities to help them conserve the historic environment. We promote public knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of our heritage.

We are also entrusted with the custodianship of some of the most important monuments of human history – such as Stonehenge and Hadrian's wall. For further information about our work, please visit the English Heritage website.

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 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion 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.

Further information

Rachel Tooby, English Heritage on 020 7973 3252 or rachel.tooby@english-heritage.org.uk.

Laura Bates, HLF Press Office on 020 7591 6027 or lbates@hlf.org.uk.