# Landmark romantic grotto wins Heritage Lottery Fund support

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The project, to be run by the Painshill Park Trust, will complete the latest phase of restoration works at the park, which is regarded as one of the most important eighteenth century landscapes in the UK. The grant will also be used to improve access to the Grotto and its interior for visitors, create two apprenticeships in gardening and building restoration, and an education post to expand Painshill's education and community outreach programmes.

Stuart McLeod, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for the South East, said: "This wonderful heritage site is one of only a handful left of this type of landscape feature and as such we fully support the restoration and this opportunity to save the grotto for future generations."

Some 158 acres, the stunning Grade I listed Georgian landscape at Painshill Park was created between 1738 and 1773 by aristocrat Charles Hamilton out of his passion for plant collecting and the new fashions for naturalistic romantic landscapes of the period. Situated on an island on the lake at the centre of the park, the Crystal Grotto is one of the last historic follies at the park to be restored. Originally created by Grotto maker Joseph Lane in 1760 for the sum of £8,000, the spectacular folly was described by German landscape designer Friedrich Ludwig von Sckell (1750-1823) as "the finest of its type ever built."

Restoration works will include the reinstatement of the Woollett Bridge – the appearance of which is preserved in an engraving dated 1760 by William Woollett – but which has since been completely lost. The Grotto itself is to have its main chamber restored, which will include lining it with calcite, gypsum, quartz, fluorite and other minerals and stones. It will also complete the framework of inverted wooden cones plastered with lime mortar and embedded with crystals to create dazzling stalactites.

As well as involving volunteers from the local community, the Trust plans to invite schools and colleges to take part in this exciting heritage project. Visitors will also be able to see and learn about the restoration as well as benefiting from improved access with restored pathways.

Mike Gove, Chief Executive of Painshill Park Trust is delighted that the application has been approved by HLF. He said: "It's an incredible achievement to receive this grant and we are extremely grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The recreation of the Grotto is an important milestone for the Trust, which is also celebrating its 30th Anniversary this year. This is going to make a huge difference to this heritage site, which has been painstakingly restored and treasured by many."

The 24-month restoration programme is due to be completed in 2013.

**Notes to editors:**

* The HLF grant to the project Grotto Restoration – Education Project is for £747,400 (86% of project costs) and is a second-round pass, which means it is a confirmed award.

**Painshill Today**

Painshill has undergone significant restoration in recent years. The Visitor Centre, which was opened in 2001, currently welcomes over 75,000 visitors every year. Painshill currently has nearly 3,000 members and is supported by over 100 volunteers. Painshill Park Trust is celebrating its 30th Anniversary and The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service which will presented to the Painshill Park Trust loyal team of volunteers later this year.

Painshill Education Centre provides lifelong learning to over 11,000 school children and adults each year. School activities are tailored to the National Curriculum and the landscape gardens enable the education department to offer unique activities that span a variety of subjects including history, science, geography and ecology.

**Heritage Lottery Fund**

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund 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 £4.6billion across the UK.

To date, HLF has made 34 awards in Elmbridge amounting to just over £5.6million.

**Further information:**

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