Lord Bristol welcomes news of HLF grant to Ickworth Church

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded £714,500 to The Ickworth Church Conservation Trust to repair and conserve the oldest and most important building on the Ickworth Estate in Suffolk, Ickworth Church.

The medieval former St Mary's Church has been the traditional burial place of the Hervey family of Ickworth since 1467. Thanks to this award the church building will be restored so that it can be open to visitors and the local community.

As part of the preservation works to the church building, the internal fabric and fittings of the church will be conserved including the medieval wall paintings, stained glass, harmonium and church clock. Improvements for visitor access will also be made, including provision for wheelchairs, so that more people are able to enjoy and explore this heritage treasure.

The Ickworth Estate attracts over 160,000 visitors each year. The restoration of Ickworth Church will offer them a wider insight into the heritage of estate and the history of the local area.

Frederick 8th Marquess of Bristol who set up the Ickworth Church Conservation Trust is spearheading the restoration of the Grade II* church.

Lord Bristol said: "I am thrilled that we have succeeded in obtaining this significant grant from HLF. All the Ickworth Church team are now very much looking forward to fully restoring Ickworth Church. As well as the support we have received from HLF, we are hugely indebted to the consistent and ongoing support that English Heritage have shown us.

This project has been a very personal project for me, as the resting place of all my ancestors for the last 550 years. I am particularly looking forward to the completion of this restoration project, and for the general public to be able to enjoy this very special and beautiful building."

David Ruffley MP, said: "The Ickworth Estate, of which the Church is an integral part, is one of the jewels in the crown of Suffolk heritage. As the MP for Ickworth, it will give me huge pleasure to celebrate the large Heritage Lottery Fund Award to the Ickworth Church Conservation Trust"

Stuart Hobley, Development Manager at Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: "I'm really pleased that our grant to the Ickworth Conservation Trust will help to completely transform this well-loved Church. Sitting within the wider Ickworth Estate, it has long been a source of local interest but access has been limited due the Church's poor condition. Thanks to a grant of £714,500 of Lottery player's money, this Church will no longer be at risk - and more than that, planned activities will help people to learn more about the history of the Church, it's role on the Estate and the opportunity to explore this truly beautiful building."

John Ette, Inspector of Ancient Monuments and Team Leader in the East of England for English Heritage said: "It was incredibly important for us to help secure the future of this very special church which has been on our Heritage at Risk register for many years. We have worked tirelessly with Lord Bristol, the HLF and the Ickworth Church Conservation

Trust to determine the best possible restoration scheme. We are excited that the National Trust are on board and that the building will have a new use, and will be opened up to the public with interpretation explaining the importance of the Hervey family's traditional burial place and its links with the main house."

St Mary's Church was sold to the 7th Marquess of Bristol in 1986 after it had been declared redundant by Church Commissioners. Since that time the church and churchyard have fallen into a state of severe disrepair and it has been on English Heritage's Heritage at Risk register ever since it began in 1998.

St Mary's Church is a medieval church with major 19th century alterations, including the tower. It includes a 15th century wall painting of the Angel of Annunciation, roundels of Flemish painted glass dating back to the 14th century as well as a mid 13th century chancel. Emergency repairs were made to the building at the end of 2008 costing £57,300, of which £37,000 was from English Heritage which is included as part of the current English Heritage grant.

A further £108,700 has been spent in 2011-12 on preliminary work. This work was funded by HLF and English Heritage. The total restoration cost for this present stage is £972,400. As well as the £714,500 from HLF, English Heritage are contributing £224,600 towards this stage, with the remainder coming from a number of smaller grant making Trusts such as the William & Jane Morris Fund, the Leche Trust, the Manifold Trust, and the Idlewild Trust.

Further information

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