More than £2.4m for South East historic places of worship

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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 1,500 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 South East.

Stuart McLeod, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the South East, 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."

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

Church of All Saints, Perry Street, Northfleet
A town church standing amidst modern housing and a parish hall. The church was constructed during 1869-70 by the builder Thomas Blake from Gravesend. It was designed by a distinguished Gothic Revival architect in a distinctive, austere but impressive style. It was reported that there was bomb damage in the vicinity during World War II and this may have caused some of the cracks that are visible in the nave. The stonework is also suffering from severe decay.

A grant totalling £140,000 will help repair the stonework and allow the roof tiles to be replaced, as they are currently in a bad state.

Church of St Augustine, Ramsgate, Kent
This town church stands on the cliff-top above the ferry port, immediately east of The Grange, home of the famous Gothic-style architect, AWG Pugin. The church has suffered from decay over time - there are leaks through the tower roof and cracks in the walls. The church will receive a £110,000 grant for urgent repairs and maintenance to prevent further deterioration. This includes repairs to the roof, the tower, and essential repairs to the electrical system to help with lighting.

Father Marcus from the Church of St Augustine, said: “We are delighted with this grant which will guarantee the future of this fabulously important site - Pugin's own 'ideal church', the place where he is buried and his abiding monument to the historic landing of St Augustine in 597AD. This is a wonderful development for the people of Ramsgate and for all those interested in the architecture of Pugin and the Gothic Revival. The church will now be able to remain open to regular worshipers and to the general public.”

Church of St Mary the Virgin, Newington, Kent
Records state that there was a church on the site in the 11th century, but the earliest part of the present church appears to be the vestry, which may have been the base of a Norman tower. The church was extensively restored in 1862 and some of the roof has recently been repaired.

However, it still needs substantial work and a £96,000 grant will aid repairs.

Other places of worship in Kent receiving grants include:

- **Church of St. Mary**, Sundridge, Sevenoaks – £40,000.
- **Church of St Mary the Virgin**, Great Chart, Ashford –£72,000.
- **Church of St Mary Magdalene**, Stockbury, Maidstone –£176,000.
- **Church of St Cosmus and St Damian**, Blean, Canterbury –£89,000.
- **Church of St Mildred**, Nurstead, Gravesham –£42,000.
- **The Parish Church of St Mary and St Eanswythe**, Folkstone, Shepway –£43,000.

Dr Andy Brown, Regional Director for English Heritage South East, 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.”

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

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