The Landmark Trust opens Astley Castle, near Nuneaton as the innovative restoration project is completed

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The building will be opening as holiday accommodation for eight people from July.

The castle which dates back to the 1200s was cited by English Heritage in 2007 as one of the 16 highest priority buildings at risk in England. Thanks to grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), English Heritage and many other organisations and individuals the building now has a new secure future.

The site is associated with three Queens of England and consists of a moated fortified manor house, gateway and curtain walls, lake, church and the ghost of pleasure gardens in a picturesque landscape.

The structure, damaged by fire in 1978, had fallen beyond a normal conservation approach. The Landmark Trust, a building preservation charity, had been concerned about the site's future since 1995 and had already discounted several solutions due to the cost and size of the project.

Caroline Stanford, Historian at the Landmark Trust, commented that: "This building has been in continuous occupation for 1,000 years and its inhabitants have seen and shaped the course of British history, but without intervention the building would have been lost forever. We are proud to have found a solution that gives Astley Castle a new life and future and one that many thousands of people will be able to be part of by staying or visiting the building. Thank you to everyone involved particularly the Heritage Lottery Fund who gave a significant grant towards this project. "

Bob Bewley, Director of Operations, Heritage Lottery Fund, said: "This project has largely been made possible by a £1.46million HLF grant awarded to the Landmark Trust over two years ago, enabling this wonderful castle, still in its rural setting, to be brought alive, opened up to the public for the first time, and put to new use as a sustainable concern. I'm delighted to see that work now complete, which will ensure the future of Astley Castle for future generations."

The Landmark Trust held an architectural competition to introduce modern living accommodation into the ancient ruins. The competition was won by Witherford Watson Mann Architects with a scheme that uses the most ancient part of the castle for the new accommodation and ties together and protects the three most ancient walls. Carefully chosen bricks have been used to stitch new walls into the ancient masonry, allowing the new to be clearly identified. Historic window openings have been used so that those staying in the castle can look out at similar views to those enjoyed centuries ago.

The project has cost £2.72million which was raised from grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage and many charitable trusts and individuals.

During the project many hundreds of local school children, individuals and organisations have played important roles in depicting and recording the site and our work as well as being involved in clearing and repairs.

New footpaths have been created around the wider site and interpretation boards erected to inform visitors of its importance within our national history.

The project will allow the building to be used and enjoyed once again. It will be available for self catering holidays for eight people throughout the year, there will be regular Open Days and visits by schools and other local groups.

The Landmark Trust also cares for two other buildings in Warwickshire: Lengthsman's Cottage at Lowsonford and the Bath House at Wellesbourne.

Notes to editors

The Landmark Trust is a buildings' preservation charity that rescues and restores historic buildings and lets them for holidays. The income from the holidays then pays for the buildings' ongoing maintenance. There are 195 Landmarks including castles, towers, forts and follies.

Further information

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