More than £1.57m for West Midlands 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 £140million 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 £9million to maintain the £25million 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 West Midlands.

Places of worship receiving grants for urgent repairs this year include:

- The medieval Grade II Listed **St Giles' in Sheldon, Birmingham**, which has parts dating back to the 14th century. The red sandstone building has been awarded a total of £117,000 towards urgent repair work to the tower.
- The timber framed **Church of St Nicholas in Dormston, near Droitwich, Worcestershire**, parts of which date back to the 14th century. The timber framed tower (Circa 1450) and porch have decayed to the point where urgent repairs are needed. A grant of £18,000 has been offered towards repairs to the decayed timber frame of the west end tower; the timber frame of the porch; the reconstruction of plinths; the re-covering of the roof; alleviation of damp penetration in bases of walls; and improvements to south side storm drainage system.
- **St Bartholomew's, Moreton Corbet, Shropshire**, which has parts dating from the 12th century. St Bartholomew's is located near Moreton Corbet Castle and had a close association with it. The church has a leaking roof which has resulted in it dropping out of alignment, putting not only the roof but the interior at risk of damage. A grant of £61,000 has been made towards the stripping and re-tiling of the roof; structural stablisation work; repair/replacement of rainwater goods; repair to gable copings; and conservation of the decorative paint scheme to the east wall of the chancel.
- The unique Victorian Church of **St Catherine, Hoarwithy in Herefordshire**. The church's tower, made from local pink sandstone and located directly over the entrance, is crumbling badly and in great need of urgent repair. A grant of £80,000 has been made to enable repairs to the tower; addressing the delamination (splitting) of loose and fragmenting stone; the replacement or consolidation of masonry; raking out and re-pointing all open joints; a check and repair of internal floors and platforms.

Anne Jenkins, Head of HLF West Midlands, 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."

Tim Johnston, Regional Director of English Heritage West Midlands, 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 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

Further information

Renee Fok, English Heritage Communications Manager on 0207 973 3250.

Hannah Brookes, COI West Midlands on 0121 222 2635.

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