# HLF investment in places of worship reaches



St Thomas Church Rathlin Island one of the many churches restored across Northern Ireland

A pair of Northern Ireland's historic churches have an extra reason to celebrate Christmas this year – as they are set for vital restoration work, supported by HLF.  The newly-announced financial support brings the total spent on Grants for Places of Worship by HLF to £26.5million across Northern Ireland.

St Eugene's Cathedral in Derry city, which opened in 1873 - although the foundation stone was laid 22 years prior - and is Grade B listed, is set for £250,000 support.  Tamlaghtfinlagan Parish Church in Ballykelly, a Church of Ireland building dating back to 1795 that is Grade B+ listed, has been earmarked for £173,800 in HLF funding.

HLF's support for local places of worship has helped drive other investment in these historic buildings which continue to be of great importance to communities – with around £2 raised in total for every £1 of its funding, helping projects worth a total of £49.5m over the past 20 years.  The Grants for Places of Worship scheme has brought benefits to every council area in Northern Ireland over that time, and helped conserve the built heritage of both urban and rural churches and cathedrals.

St Eugene's will receive essential maintenance, including repair and refurbishment of the Bell Tower, as well as protection against damage from damp.  It is predicted that annual visitor numbers to the cathedral will increase by 40% - from 50,000 to 70,000 – upon completion of the repairs.

Tamlaghtfinlagan has got the green light for roofing and stonework, as well as replacement of corroded cast iron fittings, with work planned for both the spire and main building.  Its graveyard contains the last resting place of Blind Jimmy McCurry, a fiddler who played Londonderry Air the first time its melody was ever annotated – a site that attracts a number of visitors.

Paul Mullan, Head of the HLF Northern Ireland, said: “Historic places of worship are well used and loved listed building sitting at the heart of communities. Despite the best efforts of communities these important buildings can be difficult to maintain. Our funding has been able to offer a helping hand to the buildings and ensure that they get the urgent repairs they need.  We are delighted to support St Eugene’s and Tamlaghtfinlagan Parish Church.

“HLF is committed to continuing to support listed places of worship and I am really looking forward to seeing further applications that will bring benefits to communities all over Northern Ireland.”

**Further information**

Ryan Miller via email: ryanmiller@nick-garbutt.com and tel: 07789 552 340