Historic ‘at risk’ forest church secures National



Damage to St Peter-in-the-Forest

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded a significant grant of £1,370,000 to St Peter-in-the-Forest, Walthamstow's ambitious and creative project: St Peter’s: A Unique Forest Church.

The project will help remove this Grade II Listed building from the Historic England At Risk Register, and open up exciting new uses of both building and its grounds.

The £1,880,000 project will correct serious structural damage and will restore the west end of the church to its 1880s appearance. New facilities and a remodelled interior will create three flexible community spaces on two floors. These spaces will offer better facilities for worship and activities based around acting, film-making, arts, crafts, and forest activities. The facility will also feature a community café and it will be able to be rented for community activities and for the provision of an annual festival ‘the Forestival’. The church graveyard will be enhanced with new paths and facilities from which forest activities can be undertaken.

St Peter-in-the-Forest

St Peter-in-the-Forest was built by John Shaw Jr in 1840, and extended in 1887. It is located in the protected ancient Epping Forest, a short journey from the Olympic Park and the new communities of East London. Its forest setting offers a diverse range of opportunities for community engagement with not only the built and cultural heritage, but also the natural heritage of the surrounding churchyard and ancient forest.

The vicar of the parish, Fr Paul Trathen, says: “This is tremendous, good news for our community, here in Walthamstow, and beyond. St Peter-in-the-Forest is a place quite like no other: a unique meeting of modern city and ancient forest, of beautiful architecture crafted by human creativity, surrounded by the natural creation of a loving God. Over the generations, many people have worshipped here, have made community here, have discovered a precious place and community here: with the assistance of this major, National Lottery grant, we can now help ensure that the coming years and decades will be ones in which a great variety of creative community enterprises are initiated and sustained, alongside the church’s primary role as a place for worship. Exciting times are ahead, and we are looking forward to working with many existing and new partners in crafting and growing great community projects, alongside restoring and repairing our precious building and churchyard.”

Ros Kerslake, HLF’s Chief Executive, said: “Whilst historically important buildings, what makes places of worship like St Peter-in-the-Forest so precious is their place in the heart of local communities. Surrounded by stunning forest, National Lottery funding will not only save this at-risk church but it will encourage more people to use and enjoy it! This ambitious and innovative project at St Peter’s is pioneering a new future for these wonderful spaces. “

Notes to editors

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