£4m lottery investment for two heritage sites

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The successful projects scooping confirmed* Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grants for major conservation and restoration works are Grade I listed Wakefield Cathedral and Grade II listed Wentworth Castle Conservatory in Barnsley.

Fiona Spiers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for Yorkshire and the Humber, said: “This investment will help transform these unique heritage sites meaning they will still be around for years to come. However, as we approach Volunteers Week at the beginning of June, it’s important to remember that in addition to much needed funds it is also the vital contribution that volunteers make to both heritage and the wider economy that keeps special places like Wentworth and Wakefield Cathedral alive.”

Wakefield Cathedral, West Yorkshire – confirmed award of £1.58m**
Built for worship around 1100 AD, it became a cathedral in 1888 with the formation of the Diocese of Wakefield. Today, it is the city’s most iconic building and the centre of community life with a wide ranging programme of music, worship, arts, heritage and civic events.

The HLF funding will help the Dean and Chapter realise their vision for the cathedral development project, called Heritage and Hope: An oasis at the heart of the city – and means essential development and conservation work to the grade one listed building can now go ahead to better reveal its history and heritage. Further archaeological investigations will help tell the story of what lies beneath the cathedral and create an exciting programme of activities for visitors. There will also be improved lighting, flooring, heating and better access with the removal of the Victorian pews to create a more flexible open space.

The Dean of Wakefield, the Very Revd Jonathan Greener, said: “We are thrilled to receive this marvellous news from the HLF. Wakefield feels like a really exciting place to be right now and we are delighted to be part of it. We are looking forward to being able to reshape and revitalise this beautiful building, not just for worship, but for use by the whole community. We know it will put Wakefield on the map as a vital and vibrant Cathedral City.”

Mary Creagh, MP for Wakefield, said: “This is wonderful news for Wakefield and the whole region. Along with the recent opening of the Hepworth Wakefield, and our brand new shopping centre, the improvements to the Cathedral are transforming our city. The money is a fantastic boost in the lead up to the Cathedral and Wakefield’s 125th birthday celebrations in 2013.”

Wentworth Castle Conservatory, Barnsley – confirmed award of £2.4m***
The Grade II listed Wentworth Castle Conservatory is one of the last surviving Victorian ‘winter garden’ in the country, sitting at the heart of Wentworth Castle Gardens and Stainborough Park. Built c. 1885, the delicate iron work, exotic planting and extraordinarily early use of electricity have ensured its important place among historians and architects. The site has an active Volunteer and Friends Group and over 200 people have so far sponsored panes of glass to help with restoration costs.

The project will restore the conservatory and return it to its original splendour. The potting shed adjacent will be restored as an interpretation gallery. Visitors will benefit from a range of open days, activities and events encouraging them to learn more about the intriguing history behind this Victorian gem. Training in rural crafts, garden maintenance and archaeological recording will also be offered to staff and volunteers.

John Edwards, Chairman of Wentworth Castle Trust, said: "We are absolutely thrilled that we are now well on the way to restoring this architectural gem and we are delighted that the HLF are supporting this important project."

Cllr Steve Houghton, leader of Barnsley MBC, said: "This is excellent news for Wentworth Castle Gardens and for Barnsley. It shows the value of heritage to our local economy and when complete I hope it will draw people from all over the UK and perhaps even further afield to see this Grade II listed building within the grounds of a Grade I listed site."

Angela Smith, MP for Penistone & Stocksbridge, said: “I am delighted that this piece of local history will now be safe and more importantly restored to its original splendour because of this £2.4m Heritage Lottery award. What’s more, once restored it will be open for people to admire what is the last surviving Victorian winter garden in the country. Hopefully people will come from far and wide to admire this tremendous asset of west Barnsley, an area stuffed full of history and grandeur.”

Notes to editors

*A confirmed award means that money had already been earmarked by HLF for the project in question and that the full amount has now been secured.

**The HLF grant to the project Heritage and Hope: An Oasis at the heart of the city is for £1,588,600 (81% of project costs) and is a second-round pass, which means it is a confirmed award.

***The HLF grant to the project The World at Wentworth is for £2,499,400 (68% of project costs) and is a second-round pass, which means it is a confirmed award.

To date, HLF has made 170 awards in Wakefield amounting to just over £22million, and 128 awards in Barnsley at a total of just under £20million.
Images available on request.

Further information

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