£7million to help repair England's historic places of worship

24/05/2010

English Heritage (EH) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) have today (Monday 24 May 2010) announced funding of £7million to help restore 68 historic Grade II listed places of worship in England. Places of worship from a range of faiths and denominations are set to benefit from the organisations' joint Repair Grants for Places of Worship programme.

The buildings set to benefit include the Memorial Community Church, a Grade II listed Baptist Church in Newham, East London; the Church of the Sacred Heart, a Grade II listed Roman Catholic Church in Portsmouth; and the Church of St Peter and St Paul in Lincolnshire.

In total this year, £22.7million of funding has been made available to 222 of England's Grade I, II and II listed places of worship.

Dr Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage, said, "In this country we are fortunate enough to have some of the most beautiful and historic places of worship in the world.

"Since the Repair Grants for Places of Worship scheme began in 2002, more than £179m in essential repair grants has been awarded to more than 1,900 projects, to help repair, renovate and restore historic places of worship around England. It is the largest single funding source for work of this kind and we are delighted to be able to support local communities and congregations who are doing all they can to secure a future for these treasured buildings."

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of HLF, said: "Churches are often the lifeblood of the communities they serve and an important hub for local activities. Without continued investment for essential maintenance and repair work, these precious buildings would be less likely to survive or be fit for purpose. The Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage have long been working together to protect places of worship and today's announcement of £7million will make a huge difference to the future of 68 beautiful buildings."

Julia Brocklehurst, Warden at the Church of St Peter and St Paul, said: "We welcome the grant from English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund with open arms. The church community has been trying to raise money for repairs over the last 10 years and the announcement of the grant today is a great boost for us.

"The roof in particular is in bad shape, and when it rains the congregation plays musical chairs to avoid the drops of water. But now with this grant we can extend the important services that we provide for the community."

Notes for editors

The Repair Grants for Places of Worship in England Scheme is jointly funded by English Heritage (EH) and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The scheme is administered by EH on behalf of both organisations.

In 1996, an HLF scheme was set up in partnership with EH to fund the repair of places of worship of all faiths. 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. In February 2010 the HLF and EH announced grants for urgent repair work to Grade I and

Grade II Places of Worship. 154 buildings across England received £15.7 million.

Listed places of worship in England of all denominations are eligible to apply for a grant under the Repair Grants for Places of Worship scheme. The programme supports urgent repairs to the fabric of listed places of worship and priority is given to single repair projects costing less than £250,000. There is a two stage application process with development funding available at Stage 1 to help work up proposals.

English Heritage set to launch Places of Worship as Risk campaign in June

As part of its Heritage at Risk programme, English Heritage is this year focusing on places of worship. English Heritage has been talking to congregations up and down the country and on 30 June will reveal what congregations are most concerned about and publish a practical guide pointing people towards help with maintenance, fundraising, welcoming visitors, widening use, making changes, security and sustainability. It will also release initial findings from a sample survey of the condition of listed places of worship. For further information and to order a free guide, see www.english-heritage.org.uk/powar

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

Since 1994, HLF has awarded over £478m to more than 4000 projects supporting around 3400 faith-related sites.

English Heritage is the Government's advisor for the historic environment. We provide advice on how best to conserve England's heritage for the benefit of everyone. Most of England's heritage is in private hands. We work with landowners, commerce and industry, planners and developers, national, regional and local government, the Third Sector and local communities to help them conserve the historic environment. We promote public knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of our heritage.

We are also entrusted with the custodianship of some of the most important monuments of human history – such as Stonehenge and Hadrian's wall.

Further information

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