All Souls Church

29/09/2009

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has today confirmed a grant of £3.3million for the outstanding Grade II listed All Souls Church in Bolton. This money will transform the currently redundant 19th-century building into a state-of-the-art facility providing training, education, youth activities, and health and welfare services to the local community.

Restoration plans include taking out the existing pews and replacing them with a community centre, made up of two ‘pods’ that will sit within the church building. These innovative new structures will be the first of their kind in the UK, with high-level walkways giving people a unique perspective on All Souls’ architecture and stained glass windows. An area dedicated to the history of the building and the local area will give the town’s diverse population an opportunity to explore and understand the church and its role within the community more fully.

Loyd Grossman, Chairman, The Churches Conservation Trust, said: "We are delighted! Historic churches such as All Souls are treasured features of our towns and countryside. These magnificent buildings are monuments to our history, our stories and society, but left unused they are at risk. This funding will enable us to save All Souls for future generations, to keep alive its history and spirit through contemporary community use. The transformation of All Souls also powerfully demonstrates the enormous potential these magnificent buildings have to serve communities today and I hope we can see more of these visionary schemes in the future.”

Sara Hilton, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the North West, said: "This project is truly inspirational! All Souls is an important landmark in Bolton and these cutting-edge plans are enabling a redundant heritage building to be given new life. At the Heritage Lottery Fund we believe passionately that heritage should be opened up for everyone's benefit and we are delighted that the Churches Conservation Trust is working with All Souls Community Trust to bring the church back into the heart of the community."

All Souls Church was built in 1878-81 under the patronage of the Greenhalgh brothers, local mill owners with a strong evangelical faith. The church was designed by Paley and Austin, two of Lancashire’s most prolific church architects and designers of some of the period’s most impressive Gothic revival churches.

All Souls was constructed at a time when the industrial population was growing. The parish was created in 1879 to serve the mill’s workforce who lived in the terraced streets around the church. By the middle of the 20th century, the cotton industry had declined, and the congregation had shrunk so much that the church had to close. It has now been closed for 23 years.

Inayat Omarji, All Souls Committee Secretary, said: "Wow, we’re so pleased! Five years work has now become a reality. We can now start to build what will be an amazing community centre for everyone to enjoy. I can't wait for the building work to begin.

“We are so grateful that the Heritage Lottery Fund has recognised the commitment of the Churches Conservation Trust and the local people to this project – it will transform this neighbourhood."

Moira Frew, All Souls Committee Member, added: "There has never been enough to do for young people in Crompton and this far sighted investment by the Heritage Lottery Fund will change this.

“The unique design of the internal pods is something very exciting and will provide top class facilities for all of the community to use. What makes the regeneration even more special is that we’re bringing the historic All Souls back to life for the community to use and giving it a future."

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.

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 more than 28,800 projects, allocating over £4.3billion across the UK.

This year marks The National Lottery’s 15th Anniversary. Since 1994 over £23billion - that’s £25million each week - has been raised by Lottery players for the arts, sport, heritage, environment, education, health, charity and voluntary sectors.

HLF Press Office, Roland Smith or Katie Owen on 07713 486 420 or 020 7591 6036.

Out of office hours mobile on 07973 613820.