

Durham Cathedral to receive £3.9million

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Open Treasure is the cathedral's development project that aims to transform the way visitors can enjoy the cathedral and gain inspiration from it.

This next phase is worth £10m and will see the creation of new exhibition spaces in buildings around the medieval cloister and essential fabric repairs to be claustral buildings. Visitors will be taken on a journey through a sequence of spaces that tell the story of the cathedral and its rich Christian heritage. This work will start Spring 2014 and take approximately 18 months to complete.

In addition to displaying its own collections, the cathedral will offer a rolling programme of exhibitions including items loaned from other prestigious museums, art galleries and collections, drawing many more people to discover the cathedral for the first time. To complement the new exhibitions, a varied programme of events, outreach activities, lectures, tours and workshops will be offered for schools, young people, families and adult learners to enjoy. In addition to creating a number of new employment and volunteering opportunities, the project will also create new training opportunities for cathedral staff and volunteers, who form the cornerstone of the cathedral's welcome to visitors and guests.

Durham Cathedral is one of the country's best-loved buildings, which has been at the heart of the north-east's communities for over 900 years. Today, over 600,000 people visit Durham Cathedral each year. Open Treasure aims to enrich the visitor experience and attract more people to discover and come to know and love the building, its heritage and its life.

The Very Reverend Michael Sadgrove, Dean of Durham says: "I am delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has made this award towards Open Treasure. This is a huge boost as we continue to seek the full funding required to realise the creation of world class exhibition spaces worthy of the cathedral's collections of historic artefacts and treasures. Open Treasure will transform how we welcome and offer hospitality to visitors to the cathedral as well as be good for the visitor economy of Durham and the wider north-east region. We look forward to welcoming both residents and visitors from further afield when the new spaces are complete."

Ivor Crowther, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North East, said: "Durham Cathedral, one of the most spectacular buildings in the North East, is a local heritage treasure of national and international importance. Not only a place of worship for thousands, the cathedral is a popular tourist attraction drawing in visitors to Durham from near and far. We at HLF are proud to be supporting these exciting plans that include opening up the cathedral's treasured collections and ensuring there are lots of opportunities for everyone to appreciate and enjoy them long into the future."

Notes to editors

Durham Cathedral is a Christian Church of the Anglican Communion, the shrine of St Cuthbert, the seat of the Bishop of Durham and a focus of pilgrimage and spirituality in North East England. It inhabits a treasured sacred space set in the natural and human landscape of the World Heritage Site. Its purpose is to worship God, share the gospel of Jesus Christ, welcome all who come, celebrate and pass on its rich Christian heritage and discover its place in God's creation.

The building of Durham Cathedral commenced in 1093 and took around 40 years to complete. It replaced a Saxon cathedral built by the Community of St Cuthbert after it arrived in Durham in 995 following its flight from the 'Holy Island' of Lindisfarne 80 miles north of Durham. The body of St Cuthbert is enshrined in the Feretory at Durham Cathedral and the Tomb of the Venerable Bede is in The Galilee Chapel. The cathedral existed as a Benedictine Monastery until 1539 when it became one of the Church of England's major cathedrals.

It continues to be a focus for pilgrimage and attracts over 600,000 visitors each year from all over the world. The cathedral has internationally important collections of artefacts, manuscripts and books that include St Cuthbert's coffin and his pectoral cross; superb examples of Anglo-Saxon craftsmanship. Durham Cathedral is often referred to as the best example of Romanesque architecture in Europe, or as American writer Bill Bryson put it, "the best cathedral on planet earth."

Open Treasure: Durham Cathedral is undertaking a project called Open Treasure – a major development which will transform the way in which the cathedral buildings are experienced, understood and used to the glory of God, both as working buildings and to the benefit of those who visit.

The first phase of Open Treasure was completed in autumn 2012. New choir vestries are now in use and a new Cathedral Shop with a fully accessible foyer was opened by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson in November of that year. The Treasures of St Cuthbert exhibition is not on display at present but as part of the next phase of Open Treasure, a new exhibition that includes these wonderful Anglo-Saxon artefacts will be created in the Monastic Great Kitchen.

Further information

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