Christmas comes early for ‘Westminster Abbey of Wales’ thanks to HLF funding

16/12/2010

The Galilee Chapel adjoins the Grade I listed St. Illtud’s Church, has been described as the Westminster Abbey of Wales for its unique collection of Celtic carved stones and statues of prominent individuals.

A place of worship was first established in Llantwit Major in 500AD, including a school which is now recognised as one of Britain’s earliest centres of Christian learning. The church is integral to the story of Christianity in South Wales and has strong links with Caldey Island, St David’s, Llancarfan and Llandaff.

The Rectorial Benefice of Llantwit Major will use the £298,100 of HLF funding to create a space dedicated to displaying the Celtic Stones and telling the story of Christianity as it developed from the site. Funding will also be used to train local people as volunteer guides to interpret the story for pilgrims and casual visitors.

A series of community events and school activities, as well as the production of a book, exhibition and film themed around ‘Carved in Stone’, are planned as part of the project to appeal to children and young people.

Dan Clayton Jones, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Wales, said: “St Illtud’s is hugely important to the development of early Christianity and we are delighted to play a part in ensuring that it is properly interpreted and conserved. By moving the Celtic stones into the Galilee Chapel, space within the main body of the church will be freed up for other wider activities, ensuring that the whole site remains a focal point for the whole community.”

Huw Butler, Rector of Llantwit Major, said: “This HLF grant is a wonderful Christmas gift which will help us to secure our vision for the Galilee Chapel as a centre to welcome visitors and pilgrims to learn about the history of Llanilltud Fawr, and experience the living faith and spirituality of our Christian heritage of unbroken prayer and worship for over 1500 years.”

The project has been supported by local groups including the local history society as well as wider support from the University of Lampeter’s Centre of Religion in Celtic Studies. Jane Hutt, AM for Vale of Glamorgan, is a supporter of the project, she said: “I am so pleased that funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund has been secured for this wonderful project which will allow the community to access the rich and fascinating history of Llantwit Major and the beautiful St Illtud’s Church. I look forward to visiting again and seeing the full restoration of the Galilee Chapel."

Heritage Lottery Fund awarded an initial grant of £37,500 to develop the proposals in March 2009. This announcement confirms that the full grant of £298,100 has been secured.

Note to editors

HLF has made 58 awards in the Vale of Glamorgan amounting to £10,639,247.

Process

• The full award has now been secured from HLF.
• This project has already had development funding to help them plan their proposals.
• Projects may not start immediately. Other funders may still need to make decisions and further planning work might be

required. HLF hopes that the thumbs up from our committee will provide leverage with other funders.

Further information

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