Lottery money to address urgent repairs to South West historic places of worship

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Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) announced £751,800 of Lottery funding to help secure the future of eight of the South West's most historic places of worship.

This vital money is helping congregations address a back log of urgent repairs to listed churches and chapels at risk across the South West including Portbury Church in Somerset; St John's Church in Yeovil; and the Church of St Nicholas on the Isles of Scilly.

Portbury Church in Somerset is amongst the first of 35 churches across the UK to be awarded a grant through HLF's new Grants for Places of Worship programme.

Launched in March, it supersedes the Repair Grants for Places of Worship scheme. In addition to providing money for urgent repairs, the programme is now also funding new works that support and encourage greater community use and engagement, helping to increase the number of people who take an active interest in these historic buildings and who will care for them in the future. Today's grants will support the provision of new toilets and kitchens; create historical exhibitions, leaflets and guide books; commission skills training for volunteer tour guides; and develop digital marketing tools including websites and web-based tools such as apps.

Nerys Watts, Head of HLF South West, said: "There is a place of worship in almost every ward, village and town across the South West of England, providing a very powerful visual connection with our past. Not only will our awards secure the immediate future of these particular buildings, it will also empower congregations to adapt them, where necessary, so they can be enjoyed more widely throughout the community and in turn enable them be more sustainable for the future."

Dr Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage, which provides expert advice for the programme, said: "I applaud the HLFs continuing commitment to our historic places of worship. These funds will help all 96 beneficiaries to remain viable buildings reflecting our past and contributing to our future. There is so much more to this project than just making the physical structures safe and sound. By providing money for visitor facilities, exhibitions, books and tour guides, the grants are going to help the public enjoy and appreciate these buildings. This is a vital part of keeping our heritage alive."

Grants for Places of Worship announced today include:

St John's Church, Yeovil
St John's is a Grade I listed church that dates to the 14th century. Now, its tower is in a poor condition; its stonework is severely eroding which has been exacerbated in some areas by the use of cement mortars. This grant of £162,200 will fund a stereoscopic survey to inform the course of action to secure it. In addition, the grant will also fund the production of an updated guidebook; an exhibition of the history of the building; the development of an updated website to include a heritage section; the installation of a webcam at a high level to capture the building works in action; and a programme of talks. Volunteers will also receive tour guide training in visitor welcome and it is hoped that an apprentice will be

employed for the stonemasonry.

Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Portbury Church), Portbury, Somerset
Grade I listed, the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary dates from 12th century and restored in the 19th century. This grant of £89,600 will repair the tiled roof, along with rainwater goods and drainage. In addition to the conservation work, this grant will also fund events at the church, along with guided tours throughout the year. Guidebooks and leaflets will be produced.

St Mary's Parish Church, Chard, Somerset
Grade I listed, the building of St Mary's church commenced in 1400 and was completed in 1445. Today, the building is in a poor condition and this grant of £80,500 will enable of programme of works including repairs to the roof to stop water ingress. In addition, two apprentices will be employed as part of the team undertaking the work; Design Technology students at the Holyrood Academy will visit the church whilst work is in progress; a webcam will be installed on the roof and television screen installed in the church so that works can be viewed by visitors.

The remaining five grants announced today are from the final round to be awarded under Repair Grants for Places of Worship, a joint scheme funded by HLF with expert guidance from English Heritage:

- Church of St Nicholas, Tresco, Isles of Scilly (grant £106,000)
- Church of St Peter and St Paul, Maperton, Somerset (grant £39,000)
- All Saints Church, East Huntspill, Sedgemoor, Somerset (grant £98,000)
- Church of St George the Martyr, Truro, Cornwall (grant £64,000)
- Ottery St Mary United Reformed Church, Ottery St Mary, Devon (grant £99,000)

For more information about applying for HLF's funding for places of worship visit our Grants for Places of Worship programme page.

Notes to editors

New Grants for Places of Worship scheme
Listed places of worship in the UK of all denominations and faiths are eligible for HLF grants which support urgent repairs to the fabric of the building with a focus on projects costing less than £250,000. There is a two-stage application process with development funding available at Stage One to help work up proposals. Under the new programme, applications can now be submitted for new capital works but these costs should cost no more than around 15% of the total overall budget.

HLF's new Grants for Places of Worship programme is funded and administered solely by the Heritage Lottery Fund with the exception of Scotland; however English Heritage will continue to provide expert advice in England.

Funding for places of worship in Scotland
As with the Repair Grants for Places of Worship programme, the new Grants for Places of Worship programme in Scotland is jointly funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic Scotland.

Funding for places of worship in Wales and Northern Ireland
As with the Repair Grants for Places of Worship programme, the new Grants for Places of Worship programme in both Wales and Northern Ireland is funded solely by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Further information

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