Support for Great St. Mary’s Church, Cambridge new heritage education project

25/03/2013

The programme will focus on the history and heritage of Great St. Mary’s Church and the significant part it has played in the history of the city and university of Cambridge.

The project will bring the remarkable histories of Grade I listed Great St Mary’s Church alive to wider audiences including schools and community groups, history groups, and in particular those with disabilities and hard to reach communities. We want to enable everyone to enter into a deeper experience and understanding of the people, ideas and crafts which have shaped our society today and which influence the future.

The HLF grant will enable a part-time Heritage Education Officer, the development of a heritage education programme with extensive volunteer involvement, permanent exhibitions, and a contribution to capital works at the West End of the Church to provide facilities for a Heritage Education Centre, and excellent access through a new glass West door.

There is a wealth of historical material waiting to be researched and interpreted. They want to stimulate interest, curiosity, enjoyment and wide participation through novel approaches including new media exhibitions with interactive displays developed with Cipher Arts and writer, Mike Levy. These will include tours featuring key events in the church and their historical significance and heritage-trails, a website and an extensive volunteer programme.

Imaginative workshops in stone carving and bell ringing will explore and engage with Great St Mary’s fascinating histories such as its two organs, the Cambridge composers Gibbons and Stanford, and the famous bells, which inspired the ‘Westminster Chimes’ of Big Ben.

The Rev. Canon John Binns, said: "We greatly value this strong support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, which will enable us to create an imaginative heritage education programme and centre, right at the heart of the City of Cambridge, for the benefit of schools, community groups and our many visitors. We are the only central historic building, open with free access, seven days a week throughout the year."

The Mayor, Councillor Shiela Stuart, added: "I am delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded this grant. The Church of Great St. Mary's has stood resplendent in our Market Square over many centuries. It is an imposing presence in the heart of our City which has featured in the lives of generations of people. The City Council is proud of its outreach work to schools and community groups. It is keen to work in partnership with Great St. Mary's so that schools and community groups which visit the Church might also embrace a visit to the Guildhall, and vice versa, so that, together we can raise awareness of the rich history and heritage of Great St. Mary's and the significant part it has played in the history of the City."

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England said: "This grant will enable Great St Mary’s Church, situated at the heart of the University town of Cambridge, to open its doors far and wide to local community groups and beyond so that they can share in its wonderfully rich history. We look forward to working with the church over the next three years on the development of the new Heritage Education Centre and wish them every success with the project."

Note to editors

Great St. Mary's is the University Church with a unique role at the heart of the City of Cambridge and a strong outreach dimension. It played a leading part in the history of the Reformation and there have been many royal patrons and benefactors. The church works closely with the city, schools and community groups. The church welcomes, includes and appreciates everyone that comes into the building (some 100,000 visitors a year), and values our architecture and cultural heritage as a witness for today and tomorrow.

Further information

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