Historic organ to be restored to former glory

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has announced an award of £416,000 to renovate and restore the Moot Hall Organ. This excellent news means that after the repair of its parts, the Edwardian organ will be brought back into use for town hall visitors to enjoy.

The funding will include a creative programme of community engagement activity, where local school pupils and many other interested groups will be able to find out more about the instrument and its repair.

The organ was built specifically for the Moot Hall by Norman and Beard and was first publicly played at the town hall's official opening on 15 May 1902. One hundred years later, Colchester Mayor at the time Councillor Nigel Chapman recognised that the organ's condition was deteriorating and has been campaigning to get it working properly again since.

Cllr Nigel Chapman said: "I am absolutely delighted at the news that this important part of Colchester's heritage is set to be conserved by the award of this HLF funding. The organ is a significant part of the character of the character of the Moot Hall and I am extremely excited at the prospect of hearing it played again.

"Special thanks must be given to the excellent fundraising efforts made by the Friends of the Moot Hall to help contribute to the repair of the organ."

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: "This fine historic instrument is an integral part of the town hall and its deterioration has denied concert-goers the chance to hear it for many years. As a unique example of a pipe organ, our funding will not only fund restoration but help local people and schools understand how it was built and the traditional craftsmanship involved. Soon this will all be put right and the organ can be enjoyed by both music and history lovers alike."

Colchester MP Sir Bob Russell, who is one of the patrons of the appeal, said: "I am extremely grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for this most welcome and generous donation. At what is a difficult financial time for public bodies, it is wonderful that the significant historic importance of the Moot Hall Organ has been recognised. I look forward to once again hearing this magnificent musical instrument. This is great news."

Sir Bob also paid tribute to Borough Councillor Nigel Chapman whose enthusiastic leadership of the appeal has brought it to fruition.

A tender process for the work will soon be started and it is anticipated repairs will take several years to complete.

Further information

Photo opportunities available: For further information contact 07180 588 150, email: communications@colchester.gov.uk.

For further comment, please contact Cllr Nigel Chapman on 01206 272 908

HLF press office: Vicky Wilford on 020 7591 6046 / 07973 401 937, email: vickyw@hlf.org.uk or Phil Cooper on 07889 949 173.