

The mirrored chapels and cedar trees at Northwood Cemetery

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has granted the Friends of Northwood Cemetery, working in partnership with the Isle of Wight Council, earmarked funding of £1,064,000 including a development grant of £75,300.

The development grant will fund the preparation of a further application next year to secure the full amount of funding. Plans for the cemetery include the restoration of the Grade II listed twin chapels, which are in danger of eventual collapse, in order for them to be returned to community use. In addition future plans include the creation of the island’s first municipal woodland burial site and a heritage trail within the cemetery. 'Little Ben', the bell in the east chapel tower which was cast in the same foundry that produced Westminster’s Big Ben, will be restored, the Grade II listed boundary wall along Newport Road in Cowes will be re-pointed and the central driveway through the cemetery resurfaced.

Over the next six months the development grant will be used to employ specialist project managers, consultants and contractors to draw up detailed plans and contract documentation to achieve the vision for the cemetery as specified in the application that the Heritage Lottery Fund has now accepted.

That vision is to protect the valuable heritage and conservation of the site for future generations and provide a unique community resource for both local people and visitors to Cowes.

If the further application for funds, to be made next year, is successful then on-site works may commence in 2016.

The Chairman of the Friends of Northwood Cemetery, Jon Matthews, commented: “When the Friends’ group was created in 2008 its primary goal was to attract funding to sympathetically restore the cemetery to its former splendour and capitalise on its rich heritage and natural history. That goal has now become closer with this award. These are exciting times but there’s much hard work still to be done by volunteers and we hope the award will stimulate other local people to join us. It is reassuring to note that this initiative has received overwhelming support from local organisations, community groups and schools, eighteen of whom wrote letters supporting the application submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund”.

This initiative would not be progressing without support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Stuart Mcleod, Head of HLF South East said: "Eighteen years of Lottery investment in our public parks has transformed tired and in some cases under used green spaces into thriving community hubs. Historic cemeteries, such as Northwood, with their wealth of heritage and peaceful areas of greenery, offer huge untapped potential. We're delighted to now include cemeteries specifically in this programme and Northwood will be one of the first to benefit.”

Councillor Phil Jordan, Isle of Wight Council cabinet member for Fire and Rescue and Public Health and Safety, said: “As landowners of the cemetery, we are fully supportive of the Friends of Northwood Cemetery for their contributions towards enhancing the buildings and grounds at a time when our own resources have been limited. Many thousands of volunteer hours have been expended by them and a more stable future for the cemetery is now within grasp.”

Further information

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