Old St Helen's to be saved thanks to Heritage Lottery Fund

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The project aims to consolidate the fabric of the remaining stonework to ensure long-term stability for the ruins and conserve the churchyard and its contents. Access for visitors will also be improved around the site, with a new entrance and an extended new internal staircase in the Tower. These works will be complemented by a community archaeology project, new historical and ecological interpretation, and programmes for other local interest groups.

Abandoned in 1869, the church was acquired by the Sussex Heritage Trust in 1991. The project aims to safeguard this nationally designated ruin, which is one of the oldest buildings in Hastings dating back to the 11th century. Together with its surrounding 18th century churchyard the site is considered to be locally and nationally significant with regard to Saxon and early Norman archaeological remains. Containing some 80 tombs and undisturbed medieval foundations, the site is on the English Heritage 'At Risk' register and a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund in the South East, said: "Old St Helen's is an architectural and heritage gem that deserves to be safeguarded before any further damage can occur. We are delighted to be able to help the Sussex Heritage Trust in their mission to save the building and bring its history alive for future generations."

Christopher Gebbie, the Chairman of Sussex Heritage Trust, added: "This project represents the last opportunity to save this important monument for future generations. We have a dedicated team of professionals and local supporters to help us in the work. We are grateful for financial assistance from Heritage Lottery Fund, English Heritage, the Isabel Blackman Foundation, the Ian Askew Charitable Trust and Mr and Mrs David Kowitz. We also wish to acknowledge the help and encouragement of Hastings Borough Council, the East Sussex County Archaeologist, the Friary Gardeners, the Hastings Area Archaeological Research Group and many others involved with the Project."

A public exhibition of the plans for the Project will take place on Thursday 21st July from 7 to 8.30 pm at St Helen's Church Hall, The Ridge, Hastings TN34 2RA.

Notes to editors

*HLF grant to the project Old St Helens Church Conservation Project is for £470,000 (94% of project costs) and is a second-round pass, which means it is a confirmed award.

Heritage Lottery Fund

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To date, HLF has made forty-nine awards in Hastings amounting to just over £9million.

Further information

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