Rochester Cathedral’s 'Hidden Treasures, Fresh Expressions' project secures £3.55m

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This will be added to £1.3m raised by the Cathedral Development Trust from Charitable Trusts and other sources. The project will use the cathedral’s currently inaccessible and nationally significant archives as a catalyst for the development of exhibitions and workshops in the crypt and library. These architecturally impressive spaces will be sympathetically opened up to allow access for all. The Textus Roffensis, older and considered by some to be a more significant document than the Magna Carta, is currently locked away for safety in the archives of Medway Council. The project will make the Textus the jewel in the crown of an imaginative and dynamic treasury.

Rochester Cathedral believes in the ability of people to bring the cathedral’s history alive through interpretation and participation. We are passionate about working in partnership; working alongside individuals and communities and through consultation with community groups and others in Medway and beyond we have developed a programme of inventive activities and inspiring events. Through this programme and extensive capital works we hope not only to preserve the cathedral’s heritage but encourage people to discover and explore the wonders of this unique building and its relevance for today.

The building works will include:

- disabled access throughout the building, including the Cloister Garth
- permanent exhibition of the Textus Roffensis and other treasurers in the Western Crypt (the oldest part of the building
- renewed flooring, lighting and air control in the whole crypt for temporary exhibitions
- repairs to the roof of the 17th century Cathedral Library and renewed shelving to increase opportunities for displaying books

Stuart McLeod, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund South East, said: “As the second oldest cathedral in England, Rochester Cathedral is steeped in history and is an impressive architectural gem in the heart of the town. Through opening up the library, crypt and nationally important collections, and by creating new learning spaces, more people than ever will now be able to explore the cathedral’s ‘hidden treasures' and learn about the significant role it has played in the lives of many generations of local people. With today’s HLF support, new opportunities will also be made available for people from near and far to see for themselves what makes the cathedral such a special place.”

Rochester Cathedral is the second oldest cathedral in the country with a magnificent late Norman nave. Standing in the shadow of Rochester castle on the banks of the River Medway the cathedral is a truly inspirational place with numerous hidden treasures. It has been a centre for Christian prayer for over 1400 years.

The cathedral is the most visited attraction in Medway and is working closely with the local council and others to develop the area’s tourism. This grant will considerably enhance the Cathedral as a venue for visitors and pilgrims.

Mark Beach, the Dean of Rochester, said: “I am delighted that the hard work of so many people here at the cathedral has been recognised by this major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This will enable us to open up parts of the

Cathedral which have been inaccessible and to display our treasures in a way that will both preserve them and share them with our visitors.”

Notes to editors

Rochester Cathedral's mission statement is to 'nurture the radical hope of human flourishing in Jesus Christ'. Our main activities to support this mission involve opening the building for 365 days of the year for over 150,000 visitors; it is Kent’s largest free to enter attraction. We also run an educational programme for schools (13,000 schoolchildren visit each year), hosting religious and secular celebrations, services and events, providing a cultural venue for arts, exhibition and performance, a daily programme of Christian worship, and utilising the building and its staffing resources in a variety of ways as 'open-minded space'. The cathedral is also the seat of the Bishop of Rochester and is the mother church for the diocese, and hosts major diocesan services and events.

Further information

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