St John’s Notting Hill wins Heritage Lottery Fund support

26/03/2012

The grant will be used for the restoration and relocation of the church’s organ, which holds a Grade II Historic Organ Certificate. New education and community projects will be based around the organ, with activities scheduled before, during and after the restoration process. The work begins in Easter 2012, with the restoration and relocation of the organ expected to be finished by Easter 2013. The education and community elements will continue for a year after this, with the hope that they will lay down the foundations for lasting community involvement in this project.

The project will completely overhaul and restore the historical working parts of the organ, particularly the organ’s historically-significant Barker Lever Action. A new case will be created in 21st century style, for its new location in the North Transept of the church. Internationally acclaimed sculptor Emily Young FBRS, who has pieces exhibited around the globe, including at the Imperial War Museum and Salisbury Cathedral, will be commissioned to design an alabaster eagle (the symbol of St John the Evangelist) for the front of the case.

Two permanent exhibitions detailing the history of the organ and the church, together with the development of Notting Hill over 160 years, will be created and positioned around the restored and relocated organ. There will be opportunities for volunteers to be trained to assist in the educational workshops designed especially for local schools.

Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund London, Sue Bowers, commented: “St John’s organ is a fantastic instrument that has sung its tune for centuries, HLF is delighted to see this project come to fruition. It provides local schools and community volunteers the opportunity to engage with their immediate heritage while preserving this great organ for many generations to come”.

St John’s is a focal point for the local area and is currently used by a very wide range of community groups. The church, built in 1845, was the first building in the area, and is positioned on the site of a former race course. The organ, however, pre-dates the church by 50 years, having been relocated from Holy Trinity, Clapham. The Clapham church was the base for William Wilberforce and the 'Clapham Sect', and important associations with the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade. Expert analysis over a number of years underlines the organ’s intrinsic musical worth and tonal quality, which will be revealed after its restoration and relocation.

The Worshipful Cllr. Julie Mills, the Mayor of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, in praising the work of the Restoration Campaign, wrote: “The award of this HLF grant is great. I am so pleased for everyone, as it will make a real difference.”

Author Sebastian Faulks commented: “St John’s welcomes people from every conceivable part of society. It’s what a church should be, and it deserves to flourish.”

Notes to editors

Emily Young says of her work: “The presiding value is to show the natural beauty, constructed in its physical history, of each piece of stone. This approach allows the viewer to participate in a profound way with the planet we all share. Allied with traditional carving skills, a rare and poetic presence, both contemporary and ancient, is created.”

Further information

Images and interviews, please contact: St John’s Church: on 020 7727 4262 / officemanager@stjohnsnottinghill.com or visit: www.restoringthefuture.org.uk.

Or contact Vicky Wilford, HLF press office, on 020 7591 6046 / 07973 401 937, email vickyw@hlf.org.uk.