St. Thomas

20/02/2009

A special reopening service has been held in St Thomas Parish Church in South Belfast to mark the completion of a programme of restoration works. The service of thanksgiving was attended by the Bishop of Connor and the Archbishop of Armagh as well as hundreds of parishioners. The Church, which is situated on Eglantine Avenue, received a grant of £75,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to carry out the essential repairs.

The funding was awarded thorough the HLF Repairs Grants for Places of Worship (RPOW) scheme and was used to undertake urgent external and internal works. The programme of restoration included repairs to the masonry, stained glass windows and west wall, and treatment for water damage.

The Church, which was built in 1870, is regarded as one of the finest examples of Victorian design and workmanship in Northern Ireland. The Rector, Canon W.A Lewis, said: “St Thomas’ is at the heart of the local community. Our parishioners come to worship at the church from both inside and outside the parish area, and membership includes people of many different nationalities. On behalf of the parish I would like to thank HLF for their support which has enabled us to preserve this important place of worship and ensure that it continues to serve the community for generations to come.”

HLF has given over £30 million to repair and restore religious centres since it began distributing funds over a decade ago. Hundreds of places of worship have benefited from funding which has enabled them to restore their roofs, preserve their stained glass windows and repair the damage caused by nature.

Head of HLF Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, said: "Places of worship have an importance within the local community, both spiritually and socially. The RPOW funding programme is open to all faith groups and denominations and we would encourage any organisation thinking of making an application to get in touch. HLF has already invested over £30 million through this scheme and we will continue to help conserve and protect these buildings which are rich in local heritage.

Further information

HLF Northern Ireland on 028 9031 0120.