£250,000 vital funding for North East churches

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The money comes from the Repair Grants for Places of Worship scheme*, which is now funded by HLF and administered by English Heritage.

The grants are offering much needed funds to the North East's places of worship at risk including the St Michael's Church, Byker; St James Church, Benwell; and St John's the Baptist Church, Weardale.

The Bishop of London, Dr. Richard Chartres, said: "This is extremely welcome news. Congregations across the UK are the custodians of some of our most important historic buildings and while they provide much joy and inspiration, maintaining them is a heavy financial burden. This vital investment from the Heritage Lottery Fund delivered with the benefit of English Heritage's conservation expertise, means that local people can continue to safeguard these precious places."

Ivor Crowther, Head of HLF for the North East, said; "Historic places of worship are an irreplaceable part of the North East's heritage and sit at the very heart of our local communities. Both the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage are delighted that in these difficult times, these vital repairs can still be done, ensuring these wonderful places are secured for future generations."

Carol Pyrah, English Heritage planning director for the North East said; "Thanks to the generosity of the Heritage Lottery Fund, and ultimately Lottery players, the future of these architectural gems has now been safe-guarded. The combination of HLF investment and English Heritage expertise will continue to prevent these places falling into ruin."

St Michael's Church, Byker – Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Grant: £40,000
Located within the Grade II* listed Byker estate, St Michael's Church was extended in 1936, using material from architect John Dobson's 1840-43 St Peter's Church, which stood in Oxford Street in Newcastle. In recent years the church has been subject to vandalism and is in need of restoration. A £40,000 grant will enable essential repairs to be made to the historic building work and the refurbished church will also be home to improved office space and a new café for visitors to enjoy.

St James Church, Benwell – Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Grant: £129,000
St James Church, set in the urban landscape of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, was designed by local architect John Dobson famous regionally for helping Richard Grainger develop the centre of Newcastle as well as designing Newcastle Central Station. The interior of the Church still has the original Dobson ceiling which is highly decorative. The £129,000 grant will help make significant repairs to the roof and the nave and help develop St James' as a centre of heritage and culture as well as a Place of Worship for the local community.

St John's the Baptist Church – County Durham
Grant: £92,000
This Church is located in rural Weardale in County Durham and is at high risk on the Places of Worship at Risk survey.

The grant of £92,000 will go towards re-slating the roof and rainwater goods as well as important structural repairs to the building and improving surface water drainage.

Making a difference

Today, it has been announced that a total of £8million has been awarded to 67 Grade II listed churches, chapels and synagogues across the country. Since 2002, HLF and English Heritage have worked together to award almost £200 million to help repair more than 2,000 listed places of worship, the largest single source of funds to help congregations care for their buildings.

Notes to editors

The Repair Grants for Places of Worship in England Scheme is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and administered by English Heritage on behalf of both organisations. English Heritage gives some funding to Grade I and Grade II places of worship.

Until 2010, the scheme was jointly funded by HLF and EH. As a result of Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010, EH's budget was cut and it was unable to continue funding the scheme. In 2011, HLF agreed to provide an additional £9million needed to ensure the scheme is protected in its current form until 2013.

HLF is committed to supporting the urgent repair needs for places of worship. From 2013, the scheme will be fully-funded and administered by HLF. HLF launched a three month consultation at the end of January 2011, inviting views on how best to help urgent repairs for places of worship. The consultation closed on 26th April 2011 and we are now considering the views expressed in the large volume of responses. HLF's strategy on funding places of worship will be announced in due course.

Listed places of worship in England of all denominations and faiths are eligible for grants which support urgent repairs to the fabric of the building with a focus on projects costing less than £250,000. There is a two-stage application process with development funding available at Stage One to help work up proposals.

To be eligible for the next round of funding, applicants need to apply by 30th June for Grade I and II* and 30th September for grade II listed places of worship.

English Heritage

English Heritage is the Government's statutory advisor on the historic environment. It provides advice on how best to conserve England's heritage for the benefit of everyone. While most of England's heritage is in private hands, it works with all who come into contact with it - landowners, businesses, planners and developers, national, regional and local government, the Third Sector, local communities and the general public - to help them understand, value, care for and enjoy England's historic environment.

It is also entrusted with the custodianship of over 400 sites and monuments which together form the national collection of built and archaeological heritage. These include some of the most important monuments of human history such as Stonehenge and Hadrian's Wall. Website: www.english-heritage.org.uk

Further information

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• A full list of grants and grantee contact details is available along with 22 England-wide case studies

• Images available upon request