National grant for Winchester Cathedral

30/07/2013

This national grant has been awarded to enable essential repairs to the cathedral fabric and conserve its medieval windows. It will also enable the development of three new major exhibitions: Kings and Scribes – The Birth of a Nation will engage and inspire people of all ages and backgrounds. For over a thousand years Winchester Cathedral's stories have carried national and international ecclesiastical and historical importance.

The cathedral received news that it had succeeded at the first round in May last year, which meant that the HLF felt that the project had the potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. Along with that pass came a £475k initial grant to support the assessment and development of the project with a view to an application for round two, which was submitted this April and has now been approved.

Speaking of today's announcement the cathedral's Receiver General, Canon Annabelle Boyes, said: "Last year I was able to say that I was delighted that we were in a position where we could realistically look forward to the day when we could fulfil some long held aspirations for repairs, conservation and the significant enhancement of what we offer our visitors. Today I am delighted to be able to say that work can commence, thanks to this significant contribution from the HLF."

The world famous 12th-century Winchester Bible will now be made more accessible and fully interpreted to the most modern standards in a fantastic Romanesque space on the ground floor. A mezzanine will accommodate a rolling display of the Cathedral archives and give access to the 17th-century Morley library, increasing accessibility to those rare books and documents.

Additionally the Triforium Gallery will house two completely new exhibitions. Decoding the Stones will focus upon the story of the creativity of generations of people who have been inspired by the building to shape and reshape its architecture. Kings and Scribes – The Birth of a Nation will explore the cathedral's central role in centuries of the nation's history, telling stories of power and wealth, turbulence and influence.

Each will appeal to young and old alike through the opportunities it will offer including active participation and discovery. This opportunity for learning will be enhanced by the exciting plans to refurbish and extend the learning centre which will welcome thousands of children and people of all ages enabling further outreach into the community.

More can be found in the cathedral's regular newsletter Illumination, available in the cathedral and downloadable from the cathedral website.

The past year has seen 28 conservators and other experts work with a team of cathedral staff and Volunteers to create a project and an activity plan which will transform the cathedral for generations to come.

The Receiver General continued by saying that: "Our aim whilst developing these exciting new exhibitions has been to use the opportunity to find out what people really want from the rich veins of history and heritage at the cathedral and respond. The results truly represent a paradigm shift in the way we unlock them for our local and visiting communities, and so not only will the cathedral itself benefit from the HLF's continued support but so will everyone who knows and loves the place, now and well into the future.

“We have learned much along the way about what we have here and just how our past really does inspire our future. We have been truly enthused and inspired, and now have this endorsement for that inspiration, so the hard work can begin!”

Speaking of the award, Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East, said: “Winchester Cathedral is one of the UK’s most important cathedrals having weathered the test of time for over nine hundred years. A five-year programme of urgent conservation work will ensure this precious site is protected for the future as well as revealing far more about its historic treasures through major new exhibitions. There is a strong tradition of volunteering at the cathedral, and plans to encourage more people to get involved, particularly from the local community, are something we applaud.”

The Dean of Winchester, The Very Revd James Atwell feels that “Winchester Cathedral has a significance beyond the ordinary and needs to tell its story effectively in the 21st century and offer an exceptional experience to visitors and worshippers alike. The support of the Heritage Lottery Fund is very exciting as it will enable the cathedral both to maintain its fabric and to fulfil its potential with a fresh burst of energy and dynamism in our own generation.

“The cathedral has always been about community and this award will increase our ability to reach out, welcome and serve the well-being of a new generation.”

It is expected that work will commence on the urgent repairs in the early Autumn and the conservation and exhibition projects will follow shortly.

Further information

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