

View of Cushendun Old Church from the main street

There was heartbreak in the tiny coastal village of Cushendun in County Antrim when a campaign to restore their old church just missed out in the final of the BBC's iconic Restoration series.

But campaigners didn't give up. And now, almost nine years later the villagers are celebrating after Heritage Lottery Fund earmarked £263,600 to fund the work.

The beautiful deconsecrated church is in a spectacular setting, nestled within Cushendun on the rugged Antrim coast. It won the hearts of viewers when it featured in Restoration which was hosted by the comedian Griff Rhys Jones only to be pipped in the final. The church is on the Buildings at Risk Register and is falling into dereliction.

But there was no way residents were giving up. Monica Morgan, Chair of the Cushendun Building Preservation Trust, said: "The church is too precious to lose so we dusted ourselves down and carried on fighting for it."

After a long process the campaigners finally managed to get ownership of the building transferred from the Church of Ireland and then applied again, this time to the Heritage Lottery Fund to secure the money required to transform it into a community and visitor centre for local residents and tourists.

Today HLF confirmed that the funding application had succeeded.

Paul Mullan, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, said: “Everyone will remember this beautiful building when it featured on Restoration and it was so disappointing when it missed out on winning the funds. I really admire the campaigners for their perseverance and hard work. This will become a wonderful space for residents and tourists alike. Thank you to all the lottery players who have made this possible.”

Monica concluded: “In the past few years the condition of the building has deteriorated to the point it is in a critical condition so we are thrilled to have secured the funds - restoring the church will make a great difference to the village and create a great facility for all to share.”



Exterior view of Cushendun Old Church

Cushendun Old Church to be restored after nine-year campaign