£1.2m Heritage Lottery grant brings Cardiff's



Thanks to National Lottery funding, the now vacant Grade II listed building on Charles Street will be turned into a community meeting place which will be a hub for heritage learning and local community activity, providing conference and event facilities. The refurbished chapel will also house a café, creating six full time jobs, with the project's partner organisation, RNIB Cymru providing employment and training opportunities for the blind.

Jennifer Stewart, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Wales, said: "This is a really exciting project that will bring an unused building not only back to life, but make it a central part of the local community. We're thrilled to be able to award funding to a project with such a wide range of purposes and all thanks to players of the National Lottery. Without them, projects such as this just wouldn't be possible. I can't wait to see this chapel become an integral part of modern Cardiff just as it was in the past."

Welsh heritage

Built in 1835, the chapel was originally named the Charles Street Congregational Church, but became known as Ebeneser in 1976 when a Welsh speaking congregation took on the building, playing a key part in Cardiff's Welsh heritage. With the chapel once boasting a congregation of 250 Welsh speakers, this important part of its history will be captured in oral testimonies collected by students and volunteers. Once collected, the research findings will be displayed within the refurbished Cornerstone building, reflecting the building's past within its new surroundings.

Representing early Gothic Revival, the chapel also has a rich architectural history. The exterior is built with stone work made from ballast carried on ships returning to Cardiff from the Middle East. There is also a stained glass window on the north wall which serves as a memorial to the fallen of the First World War.

Welcoming the grant announcement, Archbishop George Stack, said: “We are extremely grateful to the HLF for this significant grant and can’t wait to move ahead with the building restoration. Our hope is to bring this building back to life, creating a new community hub, whilst saving a prominent historic building at the heart of Cardiff, bringing its past and present together.”

Job creation

The project expects to create a number of new jobs, providing a boost to the local economy, tieing it into the planned 2015/6 refurbishment of the Charles Street business zone. Cornerstone hopes to benefit from its close proximity to St David’s shopping centre, reaching a wider range of event organisers and visitors, including its partner organisations RNIB Cymru.

RNIB Cymru’s Director Ceri Jackson sees the project as an exciting opportunity, saying: “The chapel will provide a unique chance for people with sight loss to enjoy activities they are often excluded from. We are planning to build a sensory garden and work in partnership to offer apprenticeships and training on site.”

Notes to editors

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded £1,206,000 in the second-round award to the Cornerstone project.

Plans for the project include:

- Restoration of the chapel's historic fabric and sensitive conversion for community use. The lower ground floor of the building will be transformed into a café and kitchen with the upper ground level adapted for use as a conference/wedding facility. At the rear of the chapel is a substantial hall which will be retained for community use.
- A commercial tenant will oversee the café and catering operation in conjunction with the RNIB Cymru and the intention is to create six full time jobs and twenty part time ones. The RNIB will also use the building to provide employment and training in the blind gardening facility planned and the proposed outside space for guide dogs.
- Cardiff University wishes to utilise the cafe area as a dedicated meeting space for international students which should provide a new dynamic for the building.
- A bilingual oral history project which aims to capture the recollections of those who attended the Ebeneser Chapel. The chapel once boasted a congregation of 250 Welsh speakers and applicant hopes to collect the oral testimonies related to these people. Students and volunteers are expected to compile these oral histories and the completed recording will be made available within the newly refurbished building as well as being available on the website and also stored on an open source platform.

Further Information

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