

January looks set to be a superb month for all things related to British landscape painter JMW Turner.

While BAFTA and Oscar nominations are expected for Mike Leigh's widely acclaimed biopic *Mr Turner* the custodians of a modest south London villa designed by the artist are already celebrating now that the historic property can be saved, thanks to a £1.4million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

While Leigh's film was storming the box office late last year trustees of the modest little 19th-century property in Twickenham, were concerned about a different type of storm.

[quote=Rosemary Vaux, Turner House Trust]This house is a national treasure[/quote]

"This house is a national treasure, but it is in a sad, sad state, and if we had to get through another bad winter without knowing whether we could go ahead with restoration, it would be truly worrying," said Rosemary Vaux, of the Turner House Trust which runs, and cares for, Sandycombe Lodge, Turner's 'country retreat'. She adds: "The months of torrential rain last winter did terrible damage, and we were really fearful of the consequences if we had another prolonged spell of such bad weather."

Now the worries are dissipating with news that a restoration project can get underway, thanks to the HLF grant. The news comes just ahead of the BAFTA and Oscar nominations and just after an announcement from the US National Society of Film Critics which presented Britain's Timothy Spall with the accolade for Best Actor for his performance as a distinctly curmudgeonly Turner. The film also won the award for Best Cinematography in recognition of its rich

evocations of the elements that the artist captured so vividly on canvas.

The Twickenham house is unique as the only surviving property in this country actually designed by a major artist for his own use. Turner drew up the plans for the ‘country retreat’ where he could live with his father, William, as depicted in Leigh’s film. Turner was resident there from 1813 to 1826.

“Interest in Turner has never been greater,” says Blondel Cluff, Chair of the HLF London Committee. “The restoration of this modest classical property introduces us to Turner, the architect, adding a whole new dimension to our understanding of this great artist. Sandycombe allows us all to literally walk inside the work of one of the world’s leading artists – a truly unique experience.”