£3.6m National Lottery grant will launch 'The Canny



The Canny Space at Holy Trinity, Sunderland

The grant will see The Churches Conservation Trust's project transform the redundant Church of Holy Trinity Sunderland into a new cultural venue and story centre for the city of Sunderland, with a focus on creative community activities and the hidden histories of the building and the city.

The HLF grant will ensure the delivery of the £3.6m 'Canny Space' project, designed to encourage local people to engage with grassroots heritage and history, whilst giving one of the most important church buildings in the North East a renewed purpose.

The grant will secure the future of the Grade I listed building, built between 1718 and 1719 for a congregation then dominated by the wealthy merchants who lived around the thriving port. The church later housed the first public library of Sunderland, acted as its first civic rooms and at one point was even the home of the Sunderland fire engine. However, during the 19th Century the civic centre of the city began to move west, and by the late 20th Century, the historic town centre had become separated from the new city centre.

The Churches Conservation Trust, the national charity saving historic churches at risk, has cared for the church since 1988, and is now working in partnership with city institutions and organisations including Sunderland University, Sunderland City Council and Hendon Young Peoples Project to bring the building back into community use and

establish it as a new cultural venue. When it reopens for its 300th anniversary in 2019, the Canny Space will attract visitors from the whole region to experience arts, heritage and learning in this beautiful building.

Loyd Grossman, Chairman of the Churches Conservation Trust, said: This is a wonderful piece of news for CCT, Sunderland and the local community. This is one of the finest churches in the north east of England, but in real need of conservation and adaptation. We cannot wait to re-launch it as the Canny Space – and all just in time for its 300th birthday!

Chris Mullin, Chairman of HLF North East, said: “This is one of Sunderland’s most important historic buildings. It was one of a handful built in the 18th Century that were once the beating heart of the community, having served both as a town hall and as a place of worship. Now, thanks to National Lottery players, this project will bring Holy Trinity back into use, a milestone in the restoration of the historic centre of Sunderland.”

Sunderland City Council Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Wellness and Culture, Councillor John Kelly said: “Sunderland is rightly proud of its rich, cultural heritage and this fantastic community led project will provide everyone with opportunity to celebrate the contribution the Church of Holy Trinity made to our growth as a city. The money raised by the community to bring this project to life was instrumental in securing this financial support of the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop it still further, and re-establish this historic building at the centre of the community.

“Working together we have created a new arts, heritage and cultural venue where people can not only learn more about our past, but also learn and develop new skills to look towards our future.”

As well as supporting Sunderland’s economy by encouraging new visitors to the area, the project will also train local people in historic building conservation skills via a training and learning programme. The extensive conservation work needed – including to the nationally important Baroque chancel arch – will provide a live workshop experience for a number of trainees.

The Canny Space is being generously supported by Sunderland City Council and we will soon begin the campaign to raise the additional money needed to deliver the project.

For more information, please visit the Canny Space page

Notes to editors

Earmarked funding means the project meets HLF criteria for funding and HLF believes the project has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so this is an endorsement of outline proposals. The project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to secure a firm award.

About the Churches Conservation Trust

- The Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) is the national charity protecting historic churches at risk
- They have saved over 340 beautiful buildings which attract more than 2million visitors a year
- Established under Ecclesiastical Law on 1 April 1969, the charity receives its churches in the form of ‘vestings’ from the Church Commissioners. All the CCT’s churches remain consecrated and are often used for occasional worship
- The CCT works with local people to bring historic churches back into the heart of the community and use as a social, tourism, educational or cultural resource. The CCT’s care of Grade I and II* buildings has given it an

international reputation in heritage conservation and regeneration
- Chairman of the Trust is Loyd Grossman OBE FSA, who was appointed in 2007. Crispin Truman is Chief Executive
- More information can be found at the Churches Conservation Trust website

Further information

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