

Lye & Wollescote Chapels building wins support

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The project aims to repair the rare redundant listed building in Cemetery Road, Lye – comprised of identical Anglican and Non-Conformist chapels - and bring them back into sustainable community and commercial use.

Development funding of £42,300 has been awarded to help the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust progress their plans to apply for a full grant of just under £850,000 at a later date. Provided that the full grant is awarded in due course, the trust hopes to carry out the necessary building work in 2014 in what is estimated will be a £1.15million scheme.

In addition, an educational programme is to be planned to enable people to understand more about the heritage importance of the chapels building and the associated cemetery, with the intention to provide opportunities for local people and schools to get involved. A project website will also be developed, providing on-line public access to information about the building, its history and the conservation project.

The local landmark building and beauty spot, originally a Victorian landscaped park, is a rare surviving example of two chapels within a single building. The site, which is currently owned by Dudley Council, was severely at risk due to lack of use when volunteers at the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust stepped in to save the historic building. Now the trust is working towards taking full ownership of the building under an arrangement called asset transfer, with this being an important pilot project supported by the council.

Chair of the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust, Bob Tolley, said: "We're delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us this support and really excited to be involved with saving this building because it means so much to local people. It is not only a place of great historical importance, it is also a lovely quiet place where the local community can escape the daily hustle and bustle. Thanks are due to many people who have worked with tireless enthusiasm over many years in order to reach this point."

Reyahn King, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands, said: "We're extremely pleased to give initial support to this project, which aims to bring to life these rare chapels so that they may benefit the community once more. We shall watch the developing plans with interest."

Notes to editors

A first-round pass 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 a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award. On occasion, an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their scheme.

West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust: The West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust (WMHBT) is a registered charity, established in 1985, with specialists in the field of building conservation giving their time on a voluntary basis to serve as trustees and funds coming from membership subscriptions. WMHBT's purpose is to safeguard buildings within the West Midlands that are of historical or architectural importance. Where this cannot be achieved by simply raising awareness to the issues, WMHBT will consider carrying out

a conservation project itself. As a registered Building Preservation Trust, WMHBT is able to attract grants and low-cost loans to carry out the type of rescue scheme often necessary with 'Buildings at Risk' and in this way aims to cover the deficit in funding such projects.

Further information

West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust

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Supporting information such as photographs and artists impressions are available on request.