

Wakefield Cathedral receives support for iconic building

18/12/2013

The first round pass with a development grant of £86,700 means the cathedral can now draw up detailed plans to transform the east end of the Grade I listed building. The cathedral hopes to submit these to HLF for a second round bid for a grant of £1.7m in summer 2014 with a decision expected in early Autumn. A new programme of fundraising and social events has already been launched for this latest appeal called Rediscovering our Heritage.

The Dean and Chapter plan to renew the major services in the east end of the cathedral, clean and conserve and protect the fabric of it and reorder St Mark's Chapel to create a separate quiet space for the cathedral's many visitors to come in and pray and reflect. Other minor but necessary works will address the damp in the crypt – where the musicians and the cathedral's famous choir practice - and the erosion of the floor in the downstairs corridor.

The Church of All Saints has stood at the heart of the city of Wakefield for over 1,000 years. It is a familiar landmark and the largest public space in the city. Ever since the medieval church was built the nave has always been open and available to local people as the focal point for shared celebration and grief – until last year.

Closed for nine months to restore and transform it as part of a £3m restoration programme also supported by HLF, Project 2013 saw the nave reopened with a first service on Palm Sunday this year.

It has been transformed with improved lighting, flooring, heating and sound systems, in addition to a bright interior to better reveal the cathedral's important heritage. The pews were also removed to create a more flexible space for worship, public gatherings, concerts, celebrations and other community uses. A labyrinth has been built into the floor from locally quarried stone while the restoration unveiled part of a painted angel above the rood screen, believed by historians to date from the original church walls 700 years ago.

Susan Rundle, development officer for the diocese of Wakefield said: "This is fantastic news and we are extremely grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Now the hard work starts as we prepare detailed plans for this next stage."

The Dean of Wakefield, the Very Revd Jonathan Greener said: "During the past few months, we've been getting used to our marvellous new bright and flexible nave fit for the 21st century and we thank everyone who has played their part in supporting us in this vital project. We now look forward to the same support as we move towards the second phase of our redevelopment programme to make the east end shine."

Fiona Spiers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Yorkshire and the Humber said: "We are delighted to be able to offer Wakefield Cathedral a development grant to get plans underway for a second phase of works. Having completed the nave to an excellent standard, we look forward to working with them to progress the new project so that even more local people and visitors can gain access to and appreciate this iconic building."

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.