

Ottery St Mary Church Under One Roof project gains support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund



The parish church in Ottery St Mary has received initial support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund for its Under One Roof project, it was announced today. Made possible thanks to National Lottery players, the project aims to carry out urgent repairs to the roof of this much-loved Grade I listed church, improve accessibility and engage the local community in the church's fascinating heritage.

Development funding of £215,544 will support a yearlong planning stage, organising the detail of the project and related activities ahead of applying for a full Heritage Fund grant at a later date. The present church dates from the 14th century and was established by Bishop Grandisson of Exeter. 2027 marks the 700th anniversary of his consecration as bishop so the project will celebrate this milestone through community activities and events.

Commenting on the award, Churchwarden Howard Clayton said: "We're delighted to receive this support thanks to National Lottery players. The church has been at the heart of Ottery life for centuries, is the centre for church spiritual life and community purposes, and draws visitors from far afield. Carrying out the urgent repairs to the roof will safeguard the building, with its wonderful historical and religious features, for all these activities. We intend to use the project to promote the local heritage, not only of our church building, but of the wider community. We want it to be an exemplar of best practice in heritage interpretation within a living faith setting."

The main aims of the project include:

- carrying out major repairs to the roof leadwork
- improving physical access to all parts of the building, especially by wheelchair users
- opening up the church towers and 14th century roof structure to visitors
- implementing an audio-visual setup which will benefit church users, tourists and events
- creating a programme of heritage activities to share and celebrate the ancient heritage of the building and churchyard. These will be developed with local groups, organisations and partners, put together and run with the help of volunteers

Stuart McLeod, Director of England - London & South at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "Thanks to National Lottery players, we are delighted to support the development of Ottery St Mary Church's Under One Roof project. This much-loved Grade I listed church is an important part of Devon's heritage, with centuries of history woven into the life of the community. Through this investment, the church can develop plans to carry out vital repairs, improve access and create new opportunities for people to explore and celebrate its heritage. This project has the potential not only to safeguard the building's future but also to bring people together to share its remarkable story. We

look forward to working with the team as they progress their plans to apply for a full National Lottery grant at a later date.”

The church will work closely with its community partners including the Ottery Heritage Society. Mr Clayton said: “A lot of organisations and individuals, from the church, the Ottery community and beyond, have helped through their hard work to get us to this point. We have had the support and involvement of many including the Heritage Society, Ottery Town Council, the schools, the Cathedral and Exeter University. We hope these and others will be a key part of sharing the heritage and planning activities over the life of the project.”

If the round two application to The National Lottery Heritage Fund is successful this will cover most of the cost of the planned works and activities but further fundraising will be needed over the next few years to complete the project.

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About Ottery St Mary Parish Church

Ottery St Mary parish church has been the centre of Christian worship in Ottery for over 750 years, and seeks to be a welcoming, inclusive and outward-facing church that serves both parishioners and the wider community. Currently it holds Sunday services with regular attendance of 80-100 people. 400+ people attend services for major festivals. The Church engages with a wide range of church and non-church groups throughout the week and is the largest event venue in the town.

The exceptional Grade I listed church brings together exceptional architecture, a rich collection of historic features, and is a prime destination for visitors to Ottery St Mary. It is open daily from 0900-1700 for casual visitors.

About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

*Grant applications over £250,000 are assessed in two rounds. Under One Roof has initially been granted round one development funding of £215,445, allowing it to progress with its plans. Detailed proposals are then considered by The National Lottery Heritage Fund at second round, where a final decision is made on the full funding award towards the total project cost which is currently expected to be around £1.3 million.

Our vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future. That’s why as the largest funder for the UK’s heritage we are dedicated to supporting projects that connect people and communities to heritage, as set out in our strategic plan, Heritage 2033. Heritage can be anything from the past that people value and want to pass on to future generations. We believe in the power of heritage to ignite the imagination, offer joy and inspiration, and to build pride in place and connection to the past.

By 2033 we aim to invest £3.6billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players to make a decisive difference for people, places and communities. heritagefund.org.uk Follow @HeritageFundUK on Facebook and Instagram and use #NationalLottery #HeritageFund

Further information

For further information, images and interviews please contact Sue Jeacock, Church Administrator, on 01404-814573 and churchoffice@otterystmary.org.uk.

