



Christchurch Priory receives lifeline grant from Government's £1.57bn Culture Recovery Fund

Christchurch Priory is one of 445 heritage organisations across the country set to receive a lifesaving financial boost from the government thanks to the £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund to help them through the coronavirus pandemic.

Christchurch Priory has been awarded a grant of £230,000 from the Heritage Stimulus Fund. This is designed to help restart construction and maintenance on cherished heritage sites to preserve visitor attractions and protect livelihoods for some of the most vulnerable heritage specialists and contractors in the sector.

The grant will be used to help fund the next phase of a programme of conservation and repair at the Priory.

These include repairs at the east end of the Priory Church to the stonework, window glass and rainwater goods of the Lady Chapel, as well as repairs to the South Nave Aisle, South Transept and the Porch.

This vital funding is from the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage and the Heritage Stimulus Fund - funded by Government and administered at arms length by Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Both funds are part of the Government's £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund which is designed to secure the future of Britain's museums, galleries, theatres, independent cinemas, heritage sites and music venues with emergency grants and loans.

The Revd Canon Charles Stewart, Vicar, said: "The conservation of Christchurch Priory, a major Grade 1 listed church that dates back to the late 11th Century, is an on-going challenge and responsibility. The funding we have received from the Culture Recovery Fund is a wonderful support and encouragement for the next phase of our programme of conservation."

Christchurch Priory is one of most important Parish Churches in the South of England. It is one of only eighteen churches nationally to which Simon Jenkins, in 'England's Thousand Best Churches', gives five stars.

The Priory Church's size and significance within the local community means that it is the natural choice for many community, civic and regional services, celebrations and cultural events. These include the annual Remembrance Day Service, the Scout & Guide St George's Day Service and many Christmas services for neighbourhood schools, choirs and organisations, including Bournemouth Hospital.



The Priory Church will remain open during the period of the conservation works (within the constraints of current lockdown legislation and guidance). It is hoped that the Lady Chapel will re-open for worship and visits at the beginning of February.

12 organisations, including English Heritage, Landmark Trust, Historic Royal Palaces and the Canal and River Trust, will receive £34 million from the Heritage Stimulus Fund to restart construction and maintenance on cherished heritage sites to preserve visitor attractions and protect livelihoods for some of the most vulnerable heritage specialists and contractors in the sector.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said: “As a nation it is essential that we preserve our heritage and celebrate and learn from our past. This massive support package will protect our shared heritage for future generations, save jobs and help us prepare for a cultural bounceback post covid.”

Duncan Wilson, Historic England’s Chief Executive said: “It is heartening to see grants, both large and small, from the Government’s Culture Recovery Fund helping heritage sites and organisations across the country which have been hit hard by the effects of COVID-19. These grants range from giving skilled craft workers the chance to keep their trades alive to helping heritage organisations pay the bills, and to kick-starting repair works at our best-loved historic sites. The funding is an essential lifeline for our heritage and the people who work tirelessly to conserve it for us all, so that we can hand it on to future generations.”

Lucy Worsley, Chief Curator, Historic Royal Palaces, said: “There’s no truer way to experience the past than to walk in the footsteps of those who have lived it – that’s why preserving our built heritage is so important.”

Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive of the National Lottery Heritage Fund said: “It is absolutely right that investing in heritage should be a priority during this crisis and this support by Government is crucial. Heritage creates jobs and economic prosperity, is a major driver for tourism and makes our towns, cities, and rural areas better places to live. All of this is so important for our wellbeing and will be particularly vital when we start to emerge from this incredibly difficult time. “

Kate Mavor, Chief Executive of English Heritage, said: “This support for our nation’s heritage is fantastic news. Over the last few months, our teams have been working hard to welcome visitors back safely to the great castles, stone circles, abbeys and historic houses in our care. This funding will help us invest to safeguard the historic fabric of these much-loved places, which everyone can learn from and enjoy.”

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