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## **Discover Christ Church! project celebrates following award of Heritage Fund grant.**

**Discover Christ Church! are celebrating today after being awarded a £239,761 grant by The National Lottery Heritage Fund for a community project to explore, restore and celebrate the heritage of this fine Victorian landmark building.**

The Discover Christ Church! project aims to become a thriving community hub for the people of Bradford on Avon that is fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thanks to National Lottery players, it will engage with the community to explore, restore and celebrate the rare Victorian heritage of this special listed building including:

- An 18-month programme of intergenerational and inclusive community activities co-designed with young people
- Restoring, regilding and restarting our landmark spire clock.
- Conserving & cleaning the nave walls and rare wall paintings,
- New energy efficient lighting,
- Repairs to the spire and tower, and
- Biodiversity enhancements to the churchyard

Work is planned to start in early 2023 and be completed in early 2025, with 'Open House' throughout – welcoming people in for community activities, events and celebrations as well as to see the restoration works in action. The 'Open House' will be both in the church and online and will enable people to see the restoration works in action wherever they are.

There will be exciting opportunities for people of all ages to become involved in community activities inspired by the heritage of Christ Church and the restoration of its landmark steeple clock and rare wall paintings restored to their former glory, and to find out about the new energy efficient lighting and how it works.

Outside, young people will survey the churchyard and design and make improvements to benefit both wildlife and the many passers-by who walk through the churchyard every day.

Generous contributions, donations and grants have also been given by the Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust and the Pilgrim Trust/Church Care, community and Parochial Church Council.

Fundraising continues to raise the last £5,000 for this project, plus the £148,500 for a project to update the church building so that it at last has an on-site kitchen and toilets as well as flexible open spaces for community use, an office and storage.



Rev. Ann Keating, Rector at Christ Church said: *“We are absolutely thrilled to receive this Heritage Fund grant thanks to National Lottery players for the Discover Christ Church! project. This is a quantum leap forward in realising our vision of Christ Church as a community hub fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with a restored and brightly lit interior, a gleaming and functioning spire clock and much improved habitat for wildlife across the churchyard. We very much look forward to welcoming people of all ages together from across the community in Discovering Christ Church! and its hidden heritage.*

*“The Heritage Fund grant, along with other grants and generous donations from the community means that the Discover Christ Church! community project can now move from idea to reality!”*

Penny Welch from Dementia Action Alliance Bradford on Avon who are working to make Bradford on Avon dementia friendly said: *“We are really excited to hear about this successful grant, and the opportunities that this will bring for young people and those with Dementia and their carers – to share experiences, memories and activities inspired by the heritage of Christ Church. We see this as beneficial for not only our group but also enabling wider understanding of those with Dementia.”*

Christ Church is a landmark in Bradford on Avon - sitting at the top of the hill, with its spire being visible across the town and for miles across the surrounding countryside. It is also nationally important building – being in the top 9% Listed Buildings in the country –the chancel and fine scheme of wall paintings having been designed and overseen by Sir George Gilbert Scott of St Pancras fame, and upon his death by his son John Oldrid Scott. Historic England highlight the rarity of survival of Christ Church’s wall paintings and the exceptional completeness of its scheme of late Victorian and Edwardian fittings.

The church building along with its neighbouring former school buildings provide a visible record of the importance of the Victorian period to the evolution and development of Bradford on Avon.

Two years of public consultation in the run-up to the Discover Christ Church! project made it clear how important the building is to the local community – including young people from Christ Church Primary School: how much they value it, concerns that their landmark steeple clock is rusting and has stopped, the poor state of repair of the nave walls and important wall paintings as well as the broken lighting system.

Helen Rutt, Acting Head Teacher of Christ Church Primary School continued: *“We are so excited to hear that the input from our Year 5 and 6 children have contributed*



*to the success of the Discover Christ Church! project in securing a grant from the Heritage Fund, and that this project can now become a reality. We very much look forward to all our children and as many of our families as possible becoming actively involved in discovering and exploring Christ Church! and designing and delivering biodiversity improvements in the churchyard – we know they have lots of ideas and will be thrilled to hear that they can put them into action!”*

As part of the project a community outreach officer will be appointed to co-design with young people and other key stakeholders an inclusive programme of activities, events and workshops - bringing together people of all ages and abilities with skilled craftspeople, contractors and practitioners on a journey to Discover Christ Church! and explore and celebrate its heritage and restoration. Perhaps these activities may inspire some young people to consider career paths not previously thought of, or older people to consider retraining.

Tim Farrer, Head Teacher at St Laurence Secondary School said: *“The Heritage Fund grant provides a fabulous and unusual opportunity St Laurence School students to have their voices heard and make a meaningful contribution to the planning and design of community activities and making the hidden heritage of Christ Church accessible and engaging for all. The content of the project also has real potential for cross-curricular benefits, opportunities to explore heritage related and practical career paths and to support delivery of St Laurence’s highly successful Duke of Edinburgh scheme.”*

## ENDS

### Notes to editors

**The Christ Church Parochial Church Council (PCC)** is a charity and the governing body of the church parish and has a range of responsibilities for the finance and maintenance of the church building. The PCC recognises that they are custodians of an important, beautiful and historic but underutilised building that has huge potential for wider community use, but that also needs significant restoration and updating. This was reinforced by public consultation which revealed the community’s care and concern for this landmark building on their doorstep.

The PCC is therefore fundraising for two separate mutually beneficial projects:

1. Discover Christ Church! – a community project to discover, explore, restore and celebrate the heritage of Christ Church, which has today been awarded £239,761 National Lottery Heritage Funding, and



2. The Future for Christ Church project – A £355,500 project to update this magnificent building – providing for the first-time essential kitchen and toilets, flexible open spaces as well as an office and storage.

Together these improvements will realise the PCC's vision of updating and restoring Christ Church so that it can become a community hub fit for the C21st.

### Christ Church - a national treasure

#### **The Historic England Grade 2\* listing for Christ Church, Bradford on Avon highlights**

This landmark church building with its soaring spire, located at the top of the hill in Bradford on Avon, is in the top 9% of listed buildings in the country - its chancel having been designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott, a renowned and prolific Victorian architect who also designed the iconic St Pancras Hotel by the train station and the Albert Memorial. He died shortly after the church was consecrated and the work including the rare scheme of wall paintings was overseen by his son John Oldrid Scott. The chancel wall paintings were restored as a part of a Millennium project. Today's Heritage Fund grant will enable the walls of the large and open nave to be cleaned and conserved and the large paintings of archangels on the west wall to be restored to their former glory and for the first time they will lit for all to see.

### Discover Christ Church fundraising progress:

**In addition to The National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of £239,761**, the Discover Christ Church! project has also secured offers of grant from

- £7,500 from the Bradford on Avon Preservation Trust towards the conservation of the nave wall paintings and the restoration of the spire clock,
- £4,000 from ChurchCare and the Pilgrim Trust towards the restoration of the nave wall paintings

Plus £5,000 in generous community donations received so far. We have a further £5,000 to raise.

### Updating Christ Church

Grant applications continue to raise a further £148,500 for the sister project that will enable the kitchen, toilets, community spaces, office and storage to go ahead.

**We are actively seeking community donations towards both projects.**



### **About The National Lottery Heritage Fund**

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we **Inspire, lead** and **resource** the UK's heritage to create **positive and lasting change** for people and communities, now and in the future. [www.heritagefund.org.uk](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk).

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Since The National Lottery began in 1994, National Lottery players have raised over £43 billion for projects and more than 635,000 grants have been awarded across the UK.

### **Further information**

For further information, images and interviews please contact

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