



ENGLISH HERITAGE

NEWS RELEASE

30 SEPTEMBER 2011

Boost for Buildings at Risk

- First grants to heritage from Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation -

The Coker Rope and Sail Trust in Somerset, George Street Chapel in Oldham and Clophill Heritage Trust in Bedfordshire have received a major boost to rescuing their historic buildings in the form of grants from the *Challenge Fund*, a £2 million fund comprising of £1 million from the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation matched by English Heritage and administered by the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF).

The grants, announced today (Monday 3 October, 2011) are the first to be awarded from the Challenge Fund, managed by the AHF, an independent charity. The AHF will disburse grants of up to £200,000 each over the next five years to voluntary sector groups such as Building Preservation Trusts (BPTs), Civic Societies, Development and Groundwork Trusts who take on historic building rescues.

The Coker Rope and Sail Trust, set up specifically to rescue the Dawes twine works in Somerset, is receiving £180,000 for repairs. Built in the early 19th century, the Grade II* listed twine works are believed to be the most complete surviving example of a rural rope works in the country. Much of the original machinery still remains and the site tells us so much about an industry bound up in Britain's naval history. The site has been on the English Heritage *Heritage at Risk* register since 2000 and the money will help to complete the final stages of repair. The site will be open for the public to enjoy in time for the Olympic sailing events at nearby Weymouth in 2012.

George Street Chapel in Oldham is owned by the charity Age Concern. It will receive £100,000 to repair the Grade II* redundant Methodist Chapel and bring it back into use. The chapel has been added to the *Heritage at Risk* register this year to focus efforts on

bringing this important listed building back into use. Although the charity will need more funding from other bodies, this grant helps them on their way to establishing an inter-generational centre at the heart of the community.

Clophill Heritage Trust has received a grant of £100,000 towards the repair of Old St Mary's in Bedfordshire. A ruined and redundant church on the outskirts of the village of Clophill, it sits on the central section of the 40-mile long Greensand Ridge walk. The building is Grade II* listed and has been on the *Heritage at Risk* register since 1998, it is also a target for anti-social behaviour. The Trust have plans to rebuild and re-roof the building and eventually turn the site into a walkers' lodge, helping to put this much loved building finally back to use.

Dr Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage, said: "This is a pioneering new venture for the heritage world between a public body with national expertise, a charity with a grass roots network and the charitable foundation of a major philanthropist. It specifically supports rescues of Grade I and II* listed buildings at risk, some of the country's most important historic treasures which are on our danger list – the *Heritage at Risk* register. As well as providing a financial kick-start, the *Challenge Fund* will also help to spread skills and experience to more people at local level. The result should be more historic buildings at risk finding a new use and once more lending character and dignity to their neighbourhoods – indeed to the country as a whole."

Ian Lush, Chief Executive of the AHF, said: "Currently, of the 250 Building Preservation Trusts in existence, only about 100 are fully active. The rest are unable to find sufficient funds to take on a rescue or lack the expertise and confidence to tackle complex and demanding Grade I and II* buildings. These grants will help to unlock funds which have been endowed for building restoration in specific areas of the country but which on their own just aren't enough. For most projects, these grants will be used as match funding for applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund, Big Lottery or other foundations or to provide development funding at a vital early stage."

Andrew Lloyd Webber said: "I am delighted that my Foundation is contributing to a solution for at least some of England's 1,600 Grade I and II* buildings at risk and am proud of the fact

that the Challenge Fund will create a wealth of new talent in the process. Philanthropy is well-established in other cultural fields but England's very special heritage forms the backdrop to all our lives and the people who put countless voluntary hours and untold effort into saving it from neglect and decay deserve the strongest possible support."

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