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Pioneering Victorian Hospital receives lifeline thanks to Landmark Trust, charity donations and National Lottery players

Historic buildings charity the Landmark Trust has successfully raised £1.5million to secure the future of Grade II* listed Winsford Cottage Hospital in Devon. £876,000 has been donated by 1,373 of the charity's supporters and grant-giving trusts combined with gifts in Wills and a surplus from the charity's operations. Today the Landmark Trust is thrilled to announce £487,000 of National Lottery funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) on top of its earlier development grant of £96,000. A further £23,000, confirmed this week from the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation towards Building Crafts Apprenticeships on the project, closed the remainder.

Designed in 1899, the building is a unique example of an unaltered cottage hospital and the only such hospital designed by pioneering Arts and Crafts architect Charles F.A. Voysey. The Landmark Trust, which saves remarkable buildings at risk and transforms them into holiday accommodation, launched a £1.5million appeal in June 2017, and the money raised will enable the full repair and restoration of this significant building and create a new self-catering property, bringing tourists to the region and creating local employment.

Anna Keay, Director of the Landmark Trust, said:

“In 1898 enlightened philanthropist Maria Medley gave Winsford Cottage Hospital to her local community in order to transform the quality of their medical care. 120 years later the generosity of Landmark's supporters alongside National Lottery players will secure the survival of this outstanding building. Some historic buildings are architecturally important and some have changed people's lives. Winsford Cottage Hospital is rare example of a structure which is genuinely both.”

Building contractor J.E. Stacey, based in Holsworthy, nine miles from the building, has been appointed to carry out the work. Work will start on site in the next few weeks and J.E. Stacey and Landmark will conserve everything possible and return the whole building to its pre-1914 state with minimal adaptation or intervention.

The project will unlock a wider programme of transformation through craft skills training, including at least two craft apprentices studying for an NVQ Level 3 in Heritage Skills plus City and Guilds and Furniture Making and Design students at Bridgewater College. There will also be volunteering opportunities and community activities, with the former accident ward available for hire by community groups, local businesses or home-workers. Referencing the building's original purpose, there will be a dedicated treatment room for a local healthcare professional and NHS prescriptions will be collected from the hospital.

2018 marks seventy years since the creation of the National Health Service, and the completion of this fundraising appeal highlights the reality of healthcare provision before 1948. Cottage hospitals had brought radical change to rural healthcare in the late-19th and early-20th centuries by allowing ordinary people to be cared for in their own communities. Many babies were born and thousands of patients, including hundreds of convalescing World War I soldiers, were treated in the now dangerously dilapidated hospital. Caroline Stanford, the Landmark Trust Historian, is embarking on in-depth research and hopes that people who know of the hospital will share their stories.

Despite a vigorous local campaign to keep the hospital open it was closed by the North and East Devon Health Authority in 1998. A small local trust was founded to keep the building in community use but the task proved too great. It has been on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register since 2009 despite being ranked in the top 6% of all listed structures for architectural importance.

Winsford Cottage Hospital epitomises Voysey's work, who pioneered a style rooted in fine local materials and exceptional craftsmanship. Voysey was best known for his country houses and Winsford was his only cottage hospital. The survival of Voysey's fittings and fixtures - such as the mosaic floor, fireplaces and metalwork - with relatively little loss is remarkable, including his beautiful yet understated details of hearts, birds and trees.

Nerys Watts, Head of HLF South West, concluded:

"Thanks to National Lottery players, this historically significant and special building will be brought back to life and given an exciting and sustainable future. As well as saving a part of Devon's heritage, this project will provide a boost for the local economy and tourism and provide valuable opportunities and community space."

Notes to editors:

1. The Landmark Trust was founded in 1965 to preserve architecturally interesting and historic buildings at risk, giving them a future by letting them for self-catering stays. The rental income pays for the buildings' upkeep but the Trust relies on grants and voluntary sources of income to rescue further buildings at risk.

Full details of all Landmark's 200 buildings are available on the website at <http://www.landmarktrust.org.uk>

2. Voysey remains one of Britain's most appreciated late Art & Crafts architects, his distinctive style of white rendered walls, horizontally set windows and low sweeping eaves anticipating the work of later Modernists (though Voysey himself rejected such a label). As well as buildings, Voysey designed fabrics, wallpaper, tiles, ceramics, furniture and metalwork. Voysey was the mentor of Charles Rennie Mackintosh.
3. Winsford's historical importance is without question as one of the finest and surviving examples of cottage hospitals, the creation of which in the 19th century revolutionised the bleak prospects of the rural working poor if they became injured or unwell. Doctors' fees were prohibitively high and the few metropolitan general hospitals were large and often unsanitary places in distant cities. For want of proper care, ordinary people died at home from entirely treatable conditions.

Enlightened local philanthropist Maria Medley commissioned Winsford Hospital from Voysey so that the community local to Halwill Junction could receive care according to their means – which often meant not paying for treatment at all.

4. Following closure in 1998, a League of Friends of Winsford Hospital raised the funds to purchase the building and the Winsford Trust was formed in 1999. Their brave venture to keep it community hands continued for a decade or so, but finally was forced to concede that upkeep was beyond their resources, and so approached Landmark.
5. About the Heritage Lottery Fund – Thanks to National Lottery players, we invest money to help people across the UK explore, enjoy and protect the heritage they care about - from the archaeology under our feet to the historic parks and buildings we love, from precious memories and collections to rare wildlife. www.hlf.org.uk. Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and use #NationalLottery
6. About the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation. The Foundation was set up by Andrew in 1992 to promote the arts, culture and heritage for the public benefit; since inception Andrew has been the principal provider of funding for all its charitable activities. In 2010, the Foundation embarked on an active grant giving programme and has now awarded grants of £19m to support high quality training and personal development as well as other projects that make a real difference to enrich the quality of life both for individuals and within local communities. www.andrewlloydwebberfoundation.com @ALWFoundation
7. For further information and media enquiries please contact:

Vanessa Shaw, Tel 01628 512137, vshaw@landmarktrust.org.uk

Or Amy Taylor, Tel 01628 512159, ataylor@landmarktrust.org.uk

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