



Media Release



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Restored Historic Chapels shortlisted for Angel Awards

People in the Black Country are being asked to vote for the restoration of a Grade II Listed building in the Black Country which has been shortlisted for a prestigious Historic England 'Angel Award'. Supported by the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation, the Historic England Angel Awards celebrate the efforts of individuals and local groups all over the country who put hours of hard work and enthusiasm into saving derelict or damaged historic landmarks and bringing them back to life.

The former Lye and Wollescote Cemetery Chapels lay disused and falling into disrepair for over a decade before the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust stepped in to save them from demolition. People living in the area had become concerned not only about the condition of the building but also about the site attracting anti-social behaviour that was blighting the area and the nearby cemetery where many had family graves.

It took 10 years of persistent negotiations and patient fund raising by the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust to come up with a sustainable new use for the building and to raise sufficient money, including a £1m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the project. The Trust is also grateful for the support of the Architectural Heritage Fund who not only provided financial support but also nominated the project for the Angel Awards.

Architects Brownhill Hayward Brown designed a perfect new home for the Stourbridge Registration Office, the new users, where couples can now marry in this beautiful historic building which has been renamed the Thomas Robinson Building. Contractors Croft Building and Conservation Ltd completed the restoration earlier this year and whilst the builders were on site more than 40 heritage related community activities took place. These included project work by pupils from local schools and colleges to create murals for the site hoarding and to design new stained glass windows.

The restoration of the building coincided with the 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War and local historians Jean Weston and Marline Price produced a book as part of the project on the 29 soldiers from the area who gave their lives, some of whom are buried in the nearby cemetery. The restoration of the building also encouraged the formation of a friends group whose dedication at weekend working parties has transformed the once overgrown cemetery into a calm and beautiful setting for the restored building.

Trust chairman Sue Whitehouse is thrilled that the work of the Trust at Lye and Wollescote has been acknowledged by this nomination for a national award: "We owe so much to the support of local people throughout this project. There were times when the project stalled and the community kept us on our toes. Our builders, from Croft Building Conservation, not only brought their tremendous craft skills to the project but were so welcoming on community open

days organising site tours and demonstrations. All of the team have been so supportive and if we win the award it will be for everyone involved. We are especially grateful to the Architectural Heritage Fund for putting us forward for this opportunity to win such a prestigious award”.

Significant grant aid was secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the restoration and to enable local people to feel fully engaged with the restoration work. Vanessa Harbar, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands, said: “The restoration of these two rare, and remarkably complete, Grade II listed identical Anglican and Non-Conformist chapels, is a great demonstration of how National Lottery funding can bring derelict buildings back into sustainable use for the greater benefit of the community. We are delighted that the project has been shortlisted for this award, and we wish the team the best of luck”

The Lye and Wollescote Cemetery Chapels has been shortlisted for an Angel Award under the Best Community Action Project category. There is also a public vote for the best overall project out of the 20 nominated under all of the categories. **Public voting closes on 12th October and takes place via the following web site www.historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/angel-awards/shortlist-2016/**

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Accompanying images:

- “Before” and “after” mages of the chapels building
- Construction course students Alan Jones, Sean Walsh and Beth Yates from Stourbridge College on work placement during the project with Andrew Hutchings (Croft Building and Conservation) and John Woodall (West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust)

Notes to editors:

To find out more please contact:

Friends of Lye & Wollescote Cemetery:

Sue Smith Secretary email: sue.smith356@btinternet.com

West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust:

Sue Whitehouse (WMHBT Chairman): 07722923907 email: sue.whitehouse@wmhbt.org.uk

David Trevis-Smith, Project Organiser: 0121 288 2007 / 07711 601560 or david@dts-solutions.co.uk or Tarnia McAlester, Project Organiser: 01746 769409 or tmcbuildingconservation@gmail.com

Stourbridge Registration Office / Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Penny Fulford, Superintendent Registrar: 01384 815374 email: penny.fulford@dudley.gov.uk

For access to the site.

Heritage Lottery Fund:

Felix Gott, Communications Manager: 0207 591 6138 or felixg@hlf.org.uk

More information about the exciting project for the Lye & Wollescote Cemetery Chapels building can be found at the project website www.lyeandwollescote.info

About the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust

The West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust is a registered charity, established in 1985, with specialists in the field of building conservation giving their time on a voluntary basis to serve as Trustees and generating operating funds from membership subscriptions. The Trust's purpose is to safeguard buildings within the West Midlands that are of historical or architectural importance. Where this cannot be achieved by simply raising awareness of the issues, the Trust will consider carrying out a conservation project itself. As a registered Building Preservation Trust, West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust is able to attract grants and low-cost loans to carry out the type of rescue scheme often necessary with 'Buildings at Risk'. In this way it aims to cover the deficit in funding such projects.

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 @heritagelottery @HLFWestMids

About the Angel Awards

The Historic England Angel Awards were founded by Andrew Lloyd Webber and are co-funded by the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation. Since 2011 these annual awards have celebrated the efforts of local people who have saved historic buildings and places.

In 2016 the award categories have been expanded to celebrate the efforts of people who go to extraordinary lengths to protect, save and share their local heritage. The awards recognise people who champion their local heritage and share and practice forgotten craft skills. They also celebrate young people, acknowledging their efforts to learn about heritage. www.historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/angel-awards/Historic-England-Angel-Awards/