

West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust

Media Release



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Historic Chapels Open Day to View Renovation Work

After over twenty years of closure, the Lye & Wollescote Cemetery Chapels are approaching completion of a yearlong conservation repair programme, supported thanks to National Lottery players, and will be welcoming the public for viewing before starting their new working role in 2016. On Saturday 28th November the Victorian Chapels, in Cemetery Road Lye, will throw open their doors to the public to see the skilful results of the specialist heritage conservation team.

West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust owns the Grade II Listed Lye & Wollescote Cemetery Chapels and is approaching completion of the regeneration of this important local building. The Trust has raised over £1,150,000 to fund the cost of the project which will safeguard this Victorian landmark by creating a suite of facilities for use by Dudley Council Citizenship & Registration Services. A grant of £1,025,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has provided the majority of the funding, with the remainder from a number of smaller funders.

The project represents an innovative transfer of ownership via the 'Community Asset Transfer' programme of Dudley Council, to take the previously dilapidated red-brick buildings into permanent local community ownership, and access heritage funding grants. As one of more than 230 Building Preservation Trusts in the UK, the local West Midlands group has spent over 10 years developing the scheme proposals which has seen fundraisers, architects, specialist heritage contractors and community workers bring the building back into use. The Buildings Trust will then

lease back the converted chapel offices and events space to the Council's Registrar for public use.

John Woodall, Acting Chairman of the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust explained: "This project has been made possible by fantastic community support and determination over many years. As the work on site is nearing completion, this is an opportunity for my fellow trustees and members of the project team to welcome local people and those interested in the region's historic buildings to drop in and view the revival of this important historic building that has been carried out using traditional heritage construction skills. The Chapels will be open from 10.30am – 1.00pm on Saturday 28th November."

The event gives the opportunity for public access into the two chapels, to see the conservation repair and conversion works to bring the building back into use nearing completion. Photographic displays will show some of the 'before and after' results of the project. Members of the Friends group will be present, along with Brownhill Hayward Brown Chartered Architects, Croft Building & Conservation and Parkin Heritage and Tourism consultants who have been working with the community and school/college groups. Local authors, Jean Weston and Marlene Price, will have available for sale copies of their two books on the history of the Chapels and WWI Soldiers and their graves.

The exterior of the building will be open to walk around. Visitors can continue into the cemetery to see its wealth of interesting monuments. A trail is being developed, ready for next year, that will highlight key graves of prominent local people, the stories associated with them and the graves of those lost in the two World Wars. A growing band of Friends are volunteering to clear ivy from some of the overgrown graves in the cemetery and more are welcome to help out on site or come on future tours of the cemetery's interesting graves.

There is limited parking within the site, for those with mobility requirements, entry via the gates. Parking also along Cemetery Road, and there is more availability along Springfield Avenue, the first junction at the corner of the cemetery site. Visitors are

advised to wear closed flat sole sturdy footwear rather than lightweight open shoes as it is a working site.

Whilst the event does not require pre-booking, to help get a sense of numbers it would be helpful if those interested in visiting could email in advance to Carolyn Healy, carolyn@redkitenetwork.co.uk or text on 07805 489296.

End

Accompanying images: Artist's impression drawings of the completed scheme

Notes to editors:

To find out more please contact:

Friends of Lye & Wollescote Cemetery:

Carolyn Healy: 07805 489296 email Carolyn@redkitenetwork.co.uk

West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust:

John Woodall (WMHBT Deputy Chairman): 07505 113122 email:

john.woodall@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

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

Supporting information such as photographs and artists impressions are available on request.

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