

West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust

Media Release



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Work begins on historic chapels

Residents may have noticed contractors moving onto site and scaffolding going up around the former Lye and Wollescote Cemetery Chapels in Cemetery Road, Lye.

This marks the next stage of many years of community proposals led by West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust to repair the Grade II listed building and regenerate it to safeguard this Victorian landmark.

Following successful grant applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund and other charitable sources, the project will create a suite of facilities for use by Dudley Council Citizenship & Registration Services. Specialist building contractors Croft Building & Conservation will be on site over the coming months, bringing the historic structure back into a state fit for re-use.

Along with the building conservation, the project is looking to set up a 'Friends' Group that will work with the existing small group of dedicated volunteers. Carolyn Healy has been appointed to support local people to establish a Friends Group that will help to look after the cemetery and tell the stories of the buildings in the future. Some of the activities of the Friends might include helping the wildlife biodiversity

within the cemetery grounds, tidying up some of the neglected graves, litter picking and organising events and fundraising.

To raise the profile of the Lye and Wollescote Cemetery Chapels project and the Friends, Carolyn will be attending the Spring Fair being run by the separate neighbouring group 'Friends of Wollescote Park'. Taking place on Saturday 11th April 2015 from 11am to 3pm at Wollescote Park the event is free and there will be lots of activities for all the family, with refreshments and fundraising. Visitors can find out about both Wollescote Park and the Cemetery Chapels projects on the day. It will be an opportunity to discover more about the repair of the chapels and learn about the history of the buildings and cemetery.

The role of volunteers and the Friends Group will be explained and how interested residents can get involved. Local authors Jean Weston and Marlene Price will be selling signed copies of their books about the Chapels and Cemetery and First World War soldiers buried and commemorated there.

If you would like to get involved in the Lye and Wollescote Cemetery Chapels Friends Group please get in touch with Carolyn by email Carolyn@redkitenetwork.co.uk or call 07805 489296.

To be involved with the Friends of Wollescote Park Spring Fair, please contact Jo on 0779 488 2967.

End

Photograph enclosed

Notes to editors:

More about the subject of this media release:

To find out more about the new Friends Group please contact Carolyn Healy by email Carolyn@redkitenetwork.co.uk or by phone 07805 489296

More about this project

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

To find out more about the wider Lye & Wollescote Cemetery Chapels project please contact David Trevis-Smith, Project Organiser: email david@dts-solutions.co.uk or phone 07711 601560

About the West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust

The West Midlands Historic Buildings Trust (WMHBT) 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 funds coming from membership subscriptions. WMHBT'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 to the issues, WMHBT will consider carrying out a conservation project itself. As a registered Building Preservation Trust, WMHBT is able to attract grants and low-cost loans to carry out the type of rescue scheme often necessary with 'Buildings at Risk' and in this way aims to cover the deficit in funding such projects.

Membership is open to anyone with an interest in safeguarding historic buildings. WMHBT organises a range of activities, focused on the West Midlands, which include a regular newsletter; specialist talks, events and visits to historic buildings; arranging public access (as appropriate) to buildings before, during and after repair; commissioning and publishing research into historic buildings; encouraging the involvement of schools and colleges in conservation projects; and disseminating information.

The first WMHBT project was 19-20 High Street, Kinver, South Staffordshire, a timber-frame building listed grade II. In the Staffordshire volume of 'The Buildings of England' series, the late Nikolaus Pevsner states that in Kinver High Street the best houses are numbers 17-20. To have lost an important building within that range would have been a tragedy, but when the WMHBT took the building over it was in a dangerous condition, with parts close to collapse. By that stage no-one was prepared to take up the arrears of maintenance because it would have cost more

than the market value to put it right. As a result of the WMHBT project, 19-20 High Street has been transformed into a comfortable four-bedroom home and is now occupied by new owners. The high standards of the work were recognised by two awards: "The Carpenters' Award" presented by English Heritage in recognition of "the sensitivity of approach and excellence of craftsmanship"; and a "mention" by the Civic Trust for its "worthy contribution to the community".

The second WMHBT project was the grade II listed office building built as a living showcase by the former Harris & Pearson Company, firebrick manufacturers, in Brettell Lane, Brierley Hill, West Midlands. The building had been unoccupied for 13 years and was in a derelict state when acquired by WMHBT, with the costs of repair again being in excess of market value. The building was converted for modern-day use as prestigious offices and materials produced to interpret the associated heritage stories (see www.harrisandpearson.info). The project was a regional finalist in the RICS Awards, a national finalist in the Brick Awards, and was awarded a Civic Trust awards "commendation".

Both of the above projects were made possible by tremendous local community and local authority support and financial assistance from several sources, including primarily the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Architectural Heritage Fund.

About the Heritage Lottery Fund

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) aims to make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities across the UK and help build a resilient heritage economy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported almost 35,000 projects with more than £5.3bn across the UK. www.hlf.org.uk.