

Norwich's St John's Cathedral gets £1m boost from Heritage Lottery Fund

Embargoed until Sunday 2nd December

Plans to dramatically improve visitor and educational facilities at Norwich's historic St John's Roman Catholic Cathedral have taken a major step forward with news that the £2.7m development project is being backed by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Cathedral has been awarded a grant of just under £1m towards an ambitious project to encourage more people to discover and enjoy the listed building in Earlham Road.

A new addition to the Cathedral – known as The Narthex – will be built as part of a drive to increase the number of educational visits by local schoolchildren and open up the building for wider use as a venue for arts and music events.

The current outdated facilities are to be replaced by new and accessible spaces, as part of the vision to make the Cathedral an open and inviting place to visit.

With over a third of the budget cost already raised to turn the project into reality, news of the Heritage Lottery grant will allow the drive to search to find a further £800,000 in funding to be stepped up.

The Cathedral, designed by George Gilbert Scott Junior and opened in 1910, is the most complete example of neo-gothic ecclesiastical architecture in the country, and the extra 400 sq metre Narthex will provide much-needed educational, interpretative and community space as well as providing level access.

Bishop Michael Evans, Bishop of East Anglia commented "I am delighted by this grant, and most grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Our plan is to draw St John's Cathedral ever deeper into the life of our county of Norfolk and our two cathedrals city of Norwich, as a way of serving the wider community. This project is a vital step in that direction." His reaction was echoed by the Cathedral Dean, Fr James Walsh, who said "This major grant is a milestone on our journey towards making St John's a player in the big league among the iconic buildings of Norwich. The city's second cathedral has much to offer people of all faiths and none and every walk of life. Although primarily a place of prayer and home to a large and flourishing community, the new centre will provide facilities for new educational and cultural activities that will enrich the life of the city and the region. It will also help us to welcome the region's new migrant workers, many of whom look to St John's as a 'home from home'. The

Heritage Lottery grant gives greater credibility to our plans and will help us to unlock further funding, both from other bodies and individuals.”

Robyn Llewellyn, Heritage Lottery Fund Manager in the East of England added; ‘This award will be hugely beneficial for everyone from local people to the thousands of visitors that come to Norwich from around the world to explore its history. The planned work will rejuvenate the Cathedral, providing much needed community facilities and a fitting welcome for all visitors.’

Work should begin on site next year and be completed within 12 months.

*Anyone wishing to make a donation or to offer support to the Narthex project can do so by calling the Cathedral Development Office on 01603 615288 (email development@stjohnscathedral.co.uk).

Note for Editors

Fr James Walsh is happy to be interviewed and can be contacted on 01603 728930 or contact Naomi Perowne on 01603 615288

An artist’s impression of how the Narthex will look is also attached.

The Heritage Lottery Fund enables communities to celebrate, look after and learn more about our diverse heritage. From our great museums and historic buildings to local parks and countryside or recording and celebrating traditions, customs and history, HLF grants open up our nation's heritage for everyone to enjoy. We have awarded grants totalling more than £4 billion to over 26,000 projects, including £250 million in the East of England alone.

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