

MEDIA INFORMATION (3 pages)
November 28th 2018

Milton Abbey Restoration Work to Continue.

Restoration work on the historic Milton Abbey in Dorset will continue despite the Heritage Lottery announcing that they will no longer be funding the 1.7 million pound project.

The Great Stare Project, one of the largest historic restoration projects in the South West, aims to carry out vital repairs to the 14th century Abbey and develop it as a visitor attraction with links to the surrounding landscape that was designed by Capability Brown.

John Simmons, the chairman of the Milton Abbey Heritage Trust, (MAHT) the charity set up to oversee the project said:

“The Heritage Lottery Fund have informed us that they will not be giving us any new permissions. This means that we shall be finishing the work started under existing permissions and then we will need to re-bid for the next phases of our plans.

The Trustees of MAHT are determined to build on the very considerable progress achieved over the last three years. News of our plans will be published on the website as they develop”.

While the grounds and surrounding woodlands are owned by Milton Abbey School and the Forestry Commission, and the Abbey and the adjoining St Catherine’s Chapel are looked after by the Diocese of Salisbury who have so far been part funding the conservation work alongside the HLF.

The Great Stare project has achieved over £695,000 of repairs to the Abbey, including significant restoration to the flooring and restoration of the Damer Memorial, but HLF funding had been sought to ensure completion of the ambitious restoration and development project and the grant would have allowed the complete repair of the key features of the Abbey including internal and external masonry, the tower windows, ceilings and vaults.

MAHT are also keen to extend the welcome to visitors to wish to share and learn about the outstanding heritage of the Abbey and its surrounding landscape. Plans were in place to fund work on the visitor attractions and educational facilities from the 1.3 million pound HLF grant, as well as the development of woodland walks in conjunction with the Forestry Commission.

The other project partners, Milton Abbey School and the Forestry Commission, remain committed to part funding the project.

The Archdeacon of Dorset, The Ven Antony MacRow-Wood, who is the Chair of the Milton Abbey Standing Committee said:

“We will be investigating all options to safeguard the future of this beautiful building.

“And while funding is being sought to continue the restoration project in a different form, the Diocese is still maintaining spiritual continuity at this ancient place of worship.

The Revd Justin Pottinger, Assistant Rural Dean of Milton and Blandford Deanery, has been appointed to oversee the development of the Benedictine spirituality at the Abbey. We will continue the established pattern of Benedictine worship here. “

On Monday 26th November a special service was held at the Abbey to welcome new Companions to the Benedictine Community that will be centred there.

ENDS

Further information

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Notes for Editors:

Background: The 14th/15th century unfinished Abbey Church and the nearby Chapel of St Catherine passed into secular hands on the dissolution of the monasteries and was purchased by the Diocesan Board of Finance in 1933.

The Milton Abbey Heritage Trust is a separate charity that is responsible, on behalf of the DBF, for the oversight and delivery of the three year development programme 'The Great Stare' (TGS) funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Church is used by Milton Abbey School as a school chapel under licence. The school is responsible for minor maintenance works to an agreed schedule.

In July 2016, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) awarded a National Lottery grant of £1,249,200 to the Diocese of Salisbury for the Great Stare project at Milton Abbey.

Unfortunately, due to concerns over the delivery of the project, HLF is no longer able to support it. HLF has met with the project team to explain the decision and advise how to bring the project to a close. HLF has to meet outstanding costs that have been incurred to date, and costs associated with the closure of the project.