



# Press Release

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## **HEADLEY CHURCH INSPIRED BY HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND GRANT**

Concern over the estimated cost of essential repairs to the spire of the 150-year old parish church at Headley, near Epsom in Surrey, diminished this week with the announcement of initial support\* from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Development funding of £12,400 has also been awarded to help St Mary's Church progress its plans, in order for the full grant of up to £89,800.00 to be confirmed. The award is part of more than £12million of Lottery money being announced by HLF to enable urgent repairs to a number of the UK's listed places of worship.

The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin is at the heart of the small village of Headley, high on the North Downs. Members of the congregation are drawn not only from the village but from the larger surrounding area of Epsom, Leatherhead and Ashted. There has been a place of worship at Headley since mediaeval times, with church records showing the names of Rectors dating back to 1311. The church has close links with nearby DMRC Headley Court, where the Rector is Chaplain.

As part of a regular inspection by the Guildford Diocese, the church spire was found to have suffered extensive damage from woodpeckers, with a significant number of holes in the cedar shingles. The intention is to replace all the shingles with oak, a harder wood treated to resist infestation by the insects sought-after by woodpeckers.

The Rector, Revd Linda Harknett, said, “We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given this support to our much-loved parish church with its magnificent spire, which is visible for miles around and is an important location marker for many travellers.”

Explaining the importance of the HLF support for places of worship, Stuart McLeod, Head of the HLF South East said, “There is a place of worship in almost every ward, village and town across the South East of England, providing a very powerful visual connection with our past. Not only will this money secure the immediate survival of churches like St Mary’s, it will also empower congregations to adapt and evolve these buildings, so they can be enjoyed more widely throughout the community and in turn enable them be more sustainable for the future.”

- ENDS -

- Separate photograph attachment -

**Notes for editors:**

*\*A first-round pass means the project meets HLF criteria for funding and HLF believes the project has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully-developed proposals and to complete the work.*

*The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Headley was consecrated by the Bishop of Winchester on 10th August 1860. The church tower is topped by a shingle spire which is which is visible for many miles around Headley. The spire is now in urgent need of repair following damage to the shingles caused mainly by woodpeckers. An appeal was launched to raise funds as part of the church’s 150th Anniversary celebrations but, despite generous support from the congregation and Headley community, a considerable shortfall remained. The Parish of Headley with Box Hill (which also includes the newer St Andrew’s Church at Box Hill) falls within the Epsom Deanery in the Diocese of Guildford.*

**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 £5.5bn across the UK. [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)*