

## PRESS RELEASE

# Granting a voice to Rochester's past

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The rich history of one of England's oldest cathedrals is to be revealed, thanks to the latest grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). Rochester Cathedral will use the grant of £931,000 for 'Ancient Stones, Untold Stories', an innovative scheme designed to bring the past to life for today's visitors.

Sheena Vick, Heritage Lottery Fund Manager for the South East, commented:

"The Cathedral stands as a cultural, spiritual and architectural landmark in Rochester, attracting visitors from near and far. This exciting scheme takes a creative approach to unfolding the Cathedral's past and is designed to offer something for everyone."

Some parts of the cathedral date from 1080AD and it stands less than 200 metres from the Norman Rochester Castle, creating a unique historic site. With 150,000 visitors per year, the medieval landmark is the largest free attraction in South East England. Yet much of the site's history remains a hidden gem in the area's cultural crown, due to limited historical information for visitors.

Thanks to the HLF support, lost historical elements of the site will be innovatively 'reinstated'. For instance, the faded medieval wall frescoes in the South Transept will be digitally re-produced and projected onto the wall 'in situ' to demonstrate what they would have looked like in the Middle Ages.

Families will have their pick of trails, interactive content and on site drop in activities, all using local characters, events and places to tell the story of the Cathedral.

An informative tour of the Cathedral and its surroundings, highlighting the key architectural and historical features will be on offer to those looking for something more in-depth. A Pilgrimage Tour will offer visitors the chance to learn about the Cathedral's spiritual heritage and make connections to 21st Century society.

This will be complemented by a new Guide Book, interpretation panels and the introduction of audio guides, as well as dedicated PDA's for the visually and hearing impaired. A free to use 'Download Centre' will allow visitors to download any tour onto their own hand-held systems too. An overhaul of the current website will enable those intrigued by their visit to find out more from the comfort of their own home or from the classroom.

The stunning building will also be made more welcoming thanks to the introduction of a glazed inner lobby at the West End, allowing the heavy wooden doors to remain open, and a glazed internal porch at the North entrance. A heavy-duty wheelchair stair lift will make it much easier for visitors with mobility issues to move around the Cathedral.

There are currently around 400 Cathedral volunteers undertaking a huge range of activities. The HLF grant will enable the Cathedral to offer additional training to the team and to recruit further people to help transform the visitor experience.

The Very Revd Adrian Newman, Dean of the cathedral, commented:

"I am delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has decided to support this innovative project. Rochester Cathedral plays a vital role within our community, especially in the way it helps to create a sense of place and identity for people. Its rich history has left hundreds of fascinating stories waiting to be told, which we can now bring to life in creative and imaginative ways."

The scheme joins a host of other HLF funded schemes in the Thames Gateway that are helping place heritage firmly on the cultural agenda as the area grows. Members of the public are invited to add stories about the history of the area onto a live blog at [www.hlf.org.uk/ebbandflow](http://www.hlf.org.uk/ebbandflow)

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#### Notes to Editors

· HLF enables communities to celebrate, look after and learn more about our diverse heritage. From our great museums and historic buildings to local parks and beauty spots or recording and celebrating traditions, customs and history, HLF grants open up our nation's heritage for everyone to enjoy. They have supported more than 26,000 projects, allocating over £4billion across the UK. Website: [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)

#### For further information

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