



The Church of England
Diocese of Ely

All Saints' Church, Walsoken
Renovation Project

Renovation Project Supporting Documentation

Title: National Lottery Heritage Fund
Expression of Interest

Date: 24th February 2026

NLHF Expression of Interest (EOI)

St Andrew, Soham: Building Repairs and Building Skills for a Brighter Future

May 2024

Have you spoken to anyone at the Fund about your idea?

Dawn Bainbridge

Describe what you will do during the project

Our project will carry out major repairs to St Andrew's Church, Soham, tackling all works necessary to remove it from the Heritage at Risk Register. The works will comprise like-for-like renewal of the lead roofing to the nave, crossing, chancel and north aisle with associated repairs to high level stonework and rainwater goods; also, major stone repairs to the tower and works to improve drainage. We will also improve high level access to roofs for future maintenance. We also wish to replace the old, failing gas heating system with electric heating (possibly under-pew heaters to heat people rather than space, but the best system has yet to be determined). We also want to install new lighting particularly to the nave ceiling to enable visitors to see the beautiful carved angels, which it is often too dark to see in detail. Building on the success of the sessions in 2023 with our last NLHF grant, we want to develop our partnership with SPAB to run more building skills workshops for 'Foundation Learning Tier' teenagers from the local secondary school, with sessions also aimed at local people and building firms, to enhance their ability to tackle historic building repairs appropriately in future.

Project title

St Andrew, Soham: Building repairs and building skills for a brighter future

Please outline how your project will respond to our four investment principles.

Saving Heritage

The repair of all parts of the Grade I listed building, which are currently in very poor condition, will strongly meet this principle.

Protecting the Environment

Using traditional materials to repair an existing building will meet this principle, as will using local suppliers and contractors. Bat surveys will ensure works are carried out without harm to wildlife. Renewing the heating system, switching to electric from gas, will improve the church's carbon footprint, eliminating damaging emissions.

Inclusion, Access and Interpretation

Building skills workshops will provide inclusion, access and aspiration by introducing young people to careers in heritage construction and give them hands on participatory experience working with stone, flints, lime mortars, lime plaster, carpentry, leadwork and blacksmithing. Extending these workshops to local people and builders will help to include the wider community in the project and training building firms in the care of historic buildings will widen the field of craftsmen capable of carrying out this work in the future. Hard hat tours during the works will allow visitors to have close access to see work in progress and lighting the ceiling will allow people to appreciate the historic timber roof structure and carved angels.

Organisational Sustainability

A fully repaired building, without new leaks appearing in the roof at regular intervals (and the ongoing cost of having them repaired), and an effective heating system (the building is currently too cold for groups to use it in winter) will allow the building to be used all year round, encouraging more volunteers and securing more income from user groups, making the building of greater importance and value to the community.

Tell us about the heritage of the project

The church is Grade I listed and contains many significant features: poppy head pews, misericords, interesting stained glass and a timber carved ceiling. Centrally located on the high street, it is valued by the whole community and used by lots of local groups. Soham Foodbank operates here weekly; Age UK regularly hold drop-in advice sessions; school children attend for national events eg Remembrance Day, the Coronation. Topical talks, concerts and plays including those featuring Olaudah Equiano (celebrating the freed slave and abolitionist, who married here in 1792) are attended by local people and hundreds of local school children.

What is the need for this project?

The building has been on the Heritage at Risk Register since 2018. Apart from the transepts which were repaired in 2023 with a NLHF grant, the condition continues to deteriorate. The roof springs new leaks regularly despite ongoing holding repairs, as the lead now needs complete replacement. This contributes to a cold and damp interior, which, combined with the partially failed and inadequate heating, makes it almost unusable in winter. Some local groups have already relocated to other venues, despite preferring the church's central location. The tower has been surrounded by heras fencing since early 2018 due to the possibility of falling masonry, creating an eyesore and hazard. Comprehensive repairs and new heating would benefit all users and encourage new ones. There are a national shortage of traditional building skills and the workshops we have already held for local people (including Soham Village College students) were hugely successful. We know the schools would welcome more of these hands-on activities. Just one morning's workshop has led to one student wishing to pursue a career in flintknapping and through our links with local SPAB members, we are supporting him in this. We see huge potential to build on this in future years.

How long do you think the project will take?

We anticipate applying in Nov 2024. Development period from Feb 2025 - March 2026. Decision June 2026. Delivery period July 2026 - end 2028 or possibly 2029. (Duration of on-site works to be determined during development period.)

How much is the project likely to cost?

All costs broad estimates at this stage, based on recent works, consultations with contractors, knowledge of the building and experience with past NLHF projects.

Building work	1,805,000
Contingency 20%	361,000
Inflation 15%	270,750
Prof fees 15%	365,515
VAT on work and fees 20%	560,450
Specialist reports	35,000
Lighting/heating	85,000
Building skills activities	40,000
Project officer/bookkeeper	30,000
Evaluation	6,000
Total	3,558,715

How much funding are you planning to apply for from us?

£2,500,000

When are you likely to submit a funding application, if asked to do so?

November 2024.

Text as submitted 14/05/2024