

## LOCAL COMMUNITY PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR HISTORIC NEWSTEAD ABBEY

Newly formed Newstead Abbey Partnership announces plans to help secure the future of one of Nottinghamshire's most significant and vulnerable heritage assets



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Today the *Newstead Abbey Partnership* (NAP) – now a formally established friends group of Newstead Abbey supporters, advocates and local partners – announced their commitment to promote the site's significance, encourage tourism and secure new funds for necessary conservation work with the support of a start-up grant of £40,000 from World Monuments Fund Britain via The Paul Mellon Estate.

At the initial meeting of the NAP, held in Newstead's historic orangery on June 25, Chairman Dr Patrick Candler praised the work of the Steering Group who had set up the partnership following two public meetings in 2013:

“The passion and enthusiasm for Newstead Abbey remains undiminished. There is a tremendous wealth of experience, skills and knowledge in our new Committee and we now have the challenge of coordinating our ideas so that we can confirm Newstead as the jewel in Nottinghamshire's cultural and heritage crown”.

The NAP was established with the help of World Monuments Fund Britain following the abbey's inclusion on the 2012 World Monuments Watch, WMF's biennial advocacy programme for threatened cultural heritage worldwide.

The listing called attention to the plight of the Grade I listed building, best known today as the ancestral home of the Romantic poet Lord Byron. The abbey's rich history stretches right back to the twelfth

century when it was founded as an Augustinian Priory by Henry II; it was later dismantled in 1539 as part of Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries before being offered to the Byron family in 1540 and converted into a residence. Set in beautiful formal gardens with medieval origins, an unusually large portion of Newstead's original monastic fabric survives, including the magnificent west front of the original priory church – now a scheduled ancient monument – and medieval cloisters.

World Monuments Fund's decision to include Newstead on the 2012 Watch reflects the vulnerable condition of the abbey and its wider estate, the substantial cost of repair work required and the ongoing challenge of enabling public access. The west front has remained on English Heritage's *Heritage at Risk Register* for some time.

Since 2012, WMF Britain has spurred positive change working in collaboration with the owner of the site, Nottingham City Council, who is investing what it can to keep Newstead maintained, but clearly does not have the resources to do all that is needed. The creation of the NAP will help to raise awareness of the plight of the abbey and to find new ways to bring in the necessary re-investment.

WMF Britain is supporting the NAP in its vision to help conserve, maintain and develop Newstead as a heritage and tourist attraction, with the aim of increasing opening hours, refreshing interpretation, improving the visitor experience and attracting new users to increase revenue to the site. In an important first step, the NAP is currently supporting the City Council's efforts to prepare an updated Condition Survey of Newstead.

Melissa Marshall, WMF Britain's Project Manager, congratulated the NAP on their success so far: "Local friends groups and trusts play an essential role in helping to look after historic buildings for everyone's enjoyment, and WMF's grant from The Paul Mellon Estate has got the NAP off to a great start ensuring that Newstead gets the support and recognition it deserves."

Nottingham City Council's Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Culture, Councillor Dave Trimble, said: "Newstead is a beautiful site and a real historic local gem, so we welcome the development of the Newstead Abbey Partnership to help support us conserve and develop the estate, ensuring our vision for a sustainable Newstead Abbey can be realised for future generations. This is an exciting time for the Abbey, with investment by Nottingham City Council already improving a number of facilities including the roads and we continue to attract new events and increase the site's annual visitor numbers."

**Further information:**

For additional information and photos, or to arrange an interview with WMFB's Chief Executive Dr Jonathan Foyle, please contact Project and Publicity Officer Sophie Buchanan on 0207 251 8142 or email [sophie@wmf.org.uk](mailto:sophie@wmf.org.uk)

For more information about the Newstead Abbey Partnership (NAP), please contact Dr Patrick Candler on 01623 821490 or email [patrick.candler@sherwoodforesttrust.org.uk](mailto:patrick.candler@sherwoodforesttrust.org.uk)

**About WMF Britain:**

*World Monuments Fund's mission is to protect against the loss of the world's architectural heritage, including the built environment, the artistic elements that enhance it, and the cultural traditions that it sustains. WMF builds global partnerships to conserve key cultural sites in response to urgent threats and broadens public understanding about the central importance of heritage in our lives. Its work makes historic places accessible and sustainable, builds and replenishes skills needed to care for our common heritage, and communicates the*

*benefits to the global public. Since its founding in 1965, World Monuments Fund has partnered with local communities, funders and governments at more than 600 sites in over 100 countries. Headquartered in New York, WMF has offices and affiliates worldwide. Over 15 years, WMF Britain, a UK registered charity, has secured the future of many significant UK sites. For more information see [www.wmf.org.uk](http://www.wmf.org.uk). In honour of its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, WMF is launching a multi-year campaign of priority projects as well as lectures, events, publications, exhibitions, and donor travel programs. More on WMF: [wmf.org](http://wmf.org), [wmf50.org](http://wmf50.org), [twitter.com/worldmonuments](https://twitter.com/worldmonuments), [facebook.com/worldmonuments](https://facebook.com/worldmonuments).*

**About the World Monuments Watch:**

*Launched in 1996 and issued every two years, the World Monuments Watch calls international attention to threatened cultural heritage sites around the world. Watch-listing provides an opportunity for sites and their nominators to raise public awareness, foster local participation, advance innovation and collaboration, and demonstrate effective solutions. The process also serves as a vehicle for requesting WMF assistance for select projects.*

*The list is assembled by a panel of international heritage experts in the fields of archaeology, architecture, art history and conservation. For many historic sites, inclusion on the Watch is the best, and sometimes the only, hope for survival. Since the Watch began, more than 740 sites in 133 countries and territories—including those on the 2014 Watch—have been included. The international attention given to Watch sites provides a vital tool with which local entities may leverage funding from a variety of sources, including municipal, regional and national governments; foundations; corporate sponsors; international aid organisations; and private donors. Since 1996, WMF has contributed over \$90 million to date; while almost \$200 million has been allocated to the sites by other entities. The social impact of the Watch is also significant, especially through Watch Day, a component of the program established in 2012 that aims to reconnect communities to their heritage through public events. For more information see [www.wmf.org/watch](http://www.wmf.org/watch).*

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