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REAWAKENING A NEO-GOTHIC MASTERPIECE AS DOVER'S MAISON DIEU SECURES £4.27M FROM THE NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND

Plans for an £8m revival of the Grade I Listed Maison Dieu in Dover town centre are set to go ahead in 2021 thanks to a £4.27m grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The project will see the restoration of internationally significant decorative schemes by the renowned Victorian neo-Gothic architect, William Burges, a new street-level visitor entrance to the Connaught Hall, along with improved access throughout the building.

The project creates a sustainable future for the Maison Dieu by bringing redundant spaces back into commercial use, including restoring the Mayor's Parlour as a holiday let in conjunction with The Landmark Trust, and a unique new café in the space once occupied by Victorian gaol cells!

Once complete in 2023 the Maison Dieu will be permanently open to the public for the first time in its 800-year history and contributing to the creation of a heritage quarter in Dover town centre.

The Maison Dieu can trace its history back to the 13th century when it was founded as a medieval hospital and used by pilgrims journeying from continental Europe to Canterbury Cathedral to visit the shrine of Thomas Becket.

It saw subsequent use as a naval victualling yard and was extensively remodelled in the 19th century by the prominent Victorian architects Ambrose Poynter and William Burges, including the development of civic offices, court room and gaol, and a concert hall. It is a very rare example of William Burges' civic work and an important landmark in the Gothic revival style.

The historic building is owned by Dover District Council which is contributing £4.9m to the project. Other funders include The Wolfson Foundation, Dover Town Council, and the Dover Society.

Planning permission and listed building consent have been granted, and following further detailed research and design work, the restoration starts in September 2021. The Maison Dieu will be closed for two years during the restoration.

Stuart McLeod, Director London & South at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: “Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players we are delighted to support this project to permanently open the Maison Dieu for the first time, helping to create a new heritage quarter in the town centre. We hope that the people of Dover will enjoy discovering more about the building’s fascinating history and its place in the town’s heritage.”

Cllr Trevor Bartlett, Leader of Dover District Council, said: “I am absolutely delighted to receive the fantastic news that The National Lottery Heritage Fund has recognised the value of the Maison Dieu as a significant heritage building in Dover town centre.

“The town is rich in history and heritage attractions, but no building tells the story of Dover better than the Maison Dieu.

“Over the past 800 years it’s been adapted to serve new purposes but has always retained strong connections with the local community. But it’s also become more complex to maintain and has been lost in plain sight, particularly to the many tourists who visit the town.

“Our aim is to revive the Maison Dieu as the centrepiece of a wider regeneration of this part of the town centre where it will be the jewel in the crown, open to the public, and providing an outstanding heritage and cultural venue.”

Dr Anna Keay OBE, Director of the Landmark Trust said: “The Landmark Trust is delighted to be playing a part in the revival of the Maison Dieu. This is a milestone moment for Dover. We look forward to supporting the restoration of this astonishing complex of buildings, and to enabling people to stay in Mayor’s Parlour - and so experience first-hand the outstanding William Burges interiors.”

Olivia Stockdale, Conservation Advisor with the Victorian Society, said: “We are pleased to learn that the Stage Two funding bid for Maison Dieu has been granted. William Burges was one of the leading architects of his day, and this Grade I-listed building is a fantastic example of his work.

“The exterior and interior restorations which this funding will enable are therefore entirely positive and will allow for a fuller appreciation of Burges’ design, and we particularly look forward to the uncovering and reinstatement of the bold interior wall painting.

“This work will benefit not only the people of Dover but all those with an appreciation of Victorian art and architecture.”

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Note to Editors:

The Maison Dieu project team includes Dover District Council, Dover Town Council, Dover Society, Ingham Pinnock, a design team led by Haverstock, and Rena Pitsilli-Graham.

Sign-up for project updates with Keep Me Posted and follow @DoverMaisonDieu on Twitter and Instagram.

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