



Norwich Historic Churches Trust Press Release – 12 August 2019

**Conservation charity gets go-ahead for major project to
save medieval church in Norwich**

The Norwich Historic Churches Trust (NHCT) has been successful in achieving a £218,000 grant from Historic England towards a vital repair project at the former church of St John de Sepulchre, located on the corner of Ber Street and Finklegate, Norwich.



St John de Sepulchre is one of 25 churches in Norwich which were founded during the reign of Edward the Confessor in the 10th century and is mentioned in the Domesday book. Today, the majority of the fabric is 15th and 16th century, making it an outstanding example of an East Anglian medieval church.

Sadly, the church is at risk due to a number of structural issues. Particularly, the vestry (built in 1906) is at risk of collapse, which, if left to deteriorate, would cause significant damage to the adjacent medieval chancel.

In 2018, Historic England provided a development grant which allowed the Trust to carry out architectural investigations and develop a viable project. Nicholas Warns Architects drew up detailed proposals for repair. Historic England's latest grant will ensure the full repair project can now go ahead. The restoration programme is due to start in November

this year and this will secure the future of this important building. Once repairs have been completed in 2020 the building will be removed from the Heritage at Risk Register.

Mark Wilson, NHCT Conservation Manager said: *“We’re very grateful to Historic England for supporting this project to save such a beautiful church and an important piece of Norwich’s history. We’re incredibly lucky to have access to so many medieval church buildings in Norwich. We believe they are a vital part of Norwich’s cultural heritage and are something that should be cherished and cared for. We look forward to welcoming more visitors to the church once the project is completed.*

Thank you also to The Freeman’s Charity, Geoffrey Watling Charity and Paul Bassham Charitable Trust for their contributions towards match funding. We still have £12,000 to raise before the project is fully funded, so any contributions would be gratefully appreciated”.

Dr Natalie Gates, Partnerships Team Leader at Historic England in the East of England, said: *“St John de Sepulchre is an outstanding example of an East Anglian medieval church. We are delighted that the essential repair work to this Grade I listed building is now able to progress, ensuring that it remains part of Norwich’s cultural heritage for future generations to visit, explore and enjoy.”*

As a registered charity, [The Norwich Historic Churches Trust](#) cares for 18 Grade I listed, medieval church buildings which are no longer used for religious worship. The Trust finds new uses for churches in its care. The majority accommodate community uses including theatres, antique centres, arts venues and places of work, with rental income used to fund conservation.

St John de Sepulchre is currently the home of ‘The Flint Room’, a locally-run wedding and ceremonies venue which celebrates “unity in all its forms” and whose message is “everyone is welcome”. NHCT is very grateful to the tenants for their support of this project as well as the work they have put into caring for the church and enabling more people to visit it.

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About Historic England

We are [Historic England](#) the public body that helps people care for, enjoy and celebrate England’s spectacular historic environment, from beaches and battlefields to parks and pie shops. We protect, champion and save the places that define who we are and where we’ve come from as a nation. We care passionately about the stories they tell, the ideas they represent and the people who live, work and play among them. Working with communities and specialists we share our passion, knowledge and skills to inspire interest, care and conservation, so everyone can keep enjoying and looking after the history that surrounds us all.

Facts about the Church

- St John de Sepulchre is one of 31 surviving medieval parish churches in the city of Norwich. The city boasts the highest concentration of medieval churches within the city walls of any city north of the Alps.
- The church is known to have existed before 1066. Today, much of the fabric is 15th and 16th century.
- Its tower is an impressive 27 metres high and is one of the tallest points in the city. It was an important landmark for travellers approaching from the South.
- The church was re-ordered in the late 19th century and is an example of the Victorians' interest in reviving the medieval style. It was possibly the first church to reintroduce the use of incense in services.
- The church is home to a number of important artefacts: the font (late 15th century) is an East Anglian lion font and is in remarkable condition. A painted rood screen showing saints dates from the late 19th century. In the chancel is a carved and painted reredos made by John Oldrid Scott in 1914.
- The church became redundant in 1984 and was used by an Eastern Orthodox congregation between 1986 and 2009. It stood empty for a number of years before being used by The Flint Room.

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