**Press Release**

Old Chapel Unitarians have been granted further Heritage Lottery Fund support to develop the restoration of their Grade 2\* listed chapel which has been closed since June 2014.

Old Chapel Unitarians have received additional support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to commence the major restoration project at Old Chapel, Dukinfield. The project will restore the roof, water dispersal system, ceiling and masonry at the neo-Gothic,19th century chapel which stands on the top of Chapel Hill, Old Road, Dukinfield. A grant of £346,800 has been awarded to help Old Chapel Unitarians progress their plans. This is a larger award than HLF normally give to churches and is because Historic England recognised the need for the work to be completed in one phase.

The project includes essential restoration work, improved access to the roof space, provision of information boards explaining the chapel’s history and its importance to Dukinfield. In addition, a video will be made of the work as it progresses and will later be available to local history groups in Tameside. There will be opportunities for volunteers to train as guides to the building who will be able to speak informatively about its history. When the work is finished it is planned to open the chapel for visits from schools and local community groups.

The history of the congregation dates back to the late 17th century when a congregation dissenting from the Church of England began meeting together illegally in the area. In 1706 Sir Robert Duckenfield, Lord of the Manor, granted the land on which the present chapel stands to that congregation. A small chapel in meeting house style was built; the first chapel specifically for public worship in Dukinfield. When the chapel was destroyed in a great storm in 1838 the present more elaborate building was already being planned by the trustees who included the industrialist John Leech, who was to become the grandfather of Beatrix Potter. At the laying of the cornerstone on 26th June 1839, in the presence of nearly 2,000 people a hymn composed by the Rev William Gaskell, minister of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, and husband of the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell, was sung. The chapel was opened in 1840 and with the addition of the west front, in 1893, it became one of the outstanding buildings in Dukinfield.

Jennifer Moody, Chapel Warden of Old Chapel said, ‘ We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund have agreed to give us further support. We are looking forward to opening chapel again for our own worship and to provide a venue for weddings and baptism of children from the wider community. It will also be great to share the history of our beautiful building better with our visitors.’

Notes to editors

**About Dukinfield Old Chapel and Sunday School Property Trust**

Old Chapel Property Trustees are the organisation within Old Chapel Unitarians with special responsibility for the buildings and the graveyard. They will be the group that will oversee the restoration work on the chapel and see that the funding from the HLF is spent appropriately.

### About the Heritage Lottery Fund

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) aims to make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities across the UK and help build a resilient heritage economy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported almost 35,000 projects with more than £5.3bn across the UK.  [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk).

**For further information, images and interviews, please contact:**

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