

Castle planning OK ...now the funding

by RYAN MERRIMAN



A NERVOUS waiting game is being played as a heritage organisation's plans to restore a castle are falling into place, but funding still needs to be secured.

Staff at the Landmark Trust are keeping their fingers crossed that a funding application will be granted to restore a castle of historical importance to its former glory.

The future of Astley Castle is now one step closer to being secured as the Landmark Trust's plans for its restoration were approved by North Warwickshire Borough Council.

A spokesperson for the Landmark Trust, said: "We are very pleased that planning permission was granted, but now we really just have to wait for news on the funding applications."

The project's architects, Witherford Watson Mann, applied to the council for Listed Building Consent and planning permission in readiness for the results later this year of the funding applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund and English Heritage.

Without the grants from the funding organisations the project is unlikely to succeed.

The project to save Astley Castle will cost £2.2m and an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant of £1.47m has been made.

The plight of Astley Castle has concerned the Landmark Trust for many years but its perilous state means that a normal conservation solution is no longer possible.

Peter Pearce, director of the Landmark Trust, said: "The committee were very supportive of our plans to save Astley Castle, which gives us great encouragement, as does the interest and support which has been expressed locally.

"Achieving planning consent for our bold scheme is an important milestone in making it a reality. The next major step for us is to secure the funding needed."

The Heritage Lottery Fund will give an indication of their intentions to fund the project in June and if this is positive the Landmark Trust will then provide a more detailed application by August, ready for a decision in December this year.

Landmark proposes to insert exciting, modern accommodation into the ruined walls of the castle. This will allow the building to be used and enjoyed once again.

The castle dates back to the 1200s and is a nationally significant building as it was the home of three queens of England, the first was Elizabeth Woodville, the second was Elizabeth of York and the third was Jane Grey.

But it is in a severe state of disrepair, it is cited by English Heritage as one of the 16 highest priority buildings at risk in England.

The Landmark Trust's plans are felt to be the final hope for the building as without intervention it will soon be beyond repair and lost forever.

Heartland Evening News, 24th April 2008