

**PRESS RELEASE 25 OCTOBER 2013**

**Bath Abbey Floor Hots Up**

After 22 weeks of restoration work, a section of the floor in Bath Abbey's North aisle has been successfully repaired saving it from eventual collapse. This section of the floor has also been fitted with underfloor heating pipes that, as part of the Abbey's long-term Footprint project, will be fuelled using Bath's famous thermal water.

The new heating will be carefully monitored for the next 12 months in order to measure its effectiveness with different floor surfaces. Two-thirds of the floor in the trial area will be recovered with the original ledger stones while the final third will be covered in new stone.

Once the trial is completed, the Abbey will use the findings and methodologies to repair the whole of the Abbey's floor and to install underfloor heating throughout. This will provide a sustainable and environmentally friendly solution to the Abbey's long-term heating needs, thanks to a partnership with Bath & North East Somerset Council to power it using the hot water which flows from the Roman Baths next door.

Charles Curnock, Footprint Project Director at Bath Abbey, said: "The floor trial work in the North aisle is imperative as we need to repair the collapsing floor. At the same time, having already identified the need to replace the present Victorian heating system with a greener, more cost effective solution, the opportunity to install under floor heating was too good to miss.

"While the more observant among our visitors and worshippers might spot the discrepancy where the new floor meets the old, the really exciting bits will all be happening underneath! What makes it even more remarkable is the thought that in just a few years' time the Abbey will be heated by Bath's great natural resource – the thermal water which currently runs out unused into the river."

The North aisle floor trial has been funded by the Coles-Medlock Foundation and Brian and Margaret Roper, and is a significant step forward for the Abbey's Footprint project. The £18 million project aims to transform the Abbey, repair the floor, install underfloor heating using the energy from the thermal baths and create 200 square metres of additional space and facilities in order to meet the needs of the community and to enhance the Abbey's service to the city.

**Ends**

**Notes to Editor**

For further details, interview requests and images please contact Elaine Teh or Katie McGill on 01225 422462 or email: [eteh@bathabbey.org](mailto:eteh@bathabbey.org) or [kmcgill@bathabbey.org](mailto:kmcgill@bathabbey.org)

**About Bath Abbey**

Bath Abbey is a flourishing Church of England parish church which technically serves a small city centre parish (Bath Abbey with St James). This parish has a small residential population and primarily

consists of commercial properties; and most of the regular congregation and the 692 people on the electoral roll live in other parishes or come from outside the city of Bath. The Abbey holds daily services of morning or evening prayer or Holy Communion; and the standard pattern of Sunday worship is for five daily services attended on average by 630 people. Special services at Advent, Christmas and Easter are well attended; and many local organisations hold annual services in the Abbey. The Abbey has four choirs: Men's, Boys' and Girls' choirs support worship in services; whilst Melody Makers is a choir for younger children which performs in concerts in the Abbey once a term and at other events in and around Bath. The Abbey runs a successful Schools Singing Programme, an outreach activity which supports singing within local schools and holds regular workshops and concerts in the Abbey. The Abbey welcomes approximately 400,000 visitors annually and is open daily all year round; many of these visitors being families and school parties. Apart from being a place of prayer, worship, weddings and funerals, the Abbey has an important role as a visitor destination, a performance space (for audiences anywhere between 10 and 1,000), a general civic space and an exhibition space.

### **About the Footprint project**

Bath Abbey Footprint is a transformative programme of capital works, interpretation, collections care and sustainable energy, provoked by the urgent need to repair and renew the Abbey's collapsing historic floor. It aims to meet the worshipping needs of the community in this age and for years to come, and to develop the facilities to support and enhance the Abbey's service to the city. The Footprint project will accomplish this by:

- Reducing Impact - stabilising the floor foundation, renewing its surface, and using the unique hot springs as a source of energy
- Enlarging Capacity - fulfilling the Abbey as a place of congregation, equal access and hospitality
- Retelling an Ancient Story - recording and interpreting the long history of the Abbey site and this iconic church for millions of visitors
- Pursuing an Ultimate Vision - supporting everyone in recognising what is valuable - individually, communally, and globally