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NEWS RELEASE

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The jewel in Torbay's crown to shine once again

The grand doors of Torre Abbey will soon be closing until the first phase of an extensive restoration make-over has been completed.

The programme follows the allocation of a £4.9 million grant in February 2004 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore Torre Abbey and to transform its prospects as an educational facility and tourist attraction.

The start of the refurbishment will be celebrated when David Suchet, known as Agatha Christie's Inspector Poirot who is a supporter of the historic building performs the official closing ceremony to allow the project to get underway.

The restoration programme will enable the council to make the major repairs needed to the building, as well as installing adaptations for people with disabilities, car parking, a café and a shop.

Councillor Colin Charlwood, Heritage Champion said: "Torre Abbey has been in danger of falling into disrepair since the 19th Century. We are all delighted to help save the building and be able to open it up for future generations to explore and enjoy.

"This project, which is the first of three phases to completely renovate the abbey and gardens over the next ten years will make the building suitable for people with disabilities, including a new entrance, new ticketing and reception areas, lifts and ramps to all floors.

"Following its refurbishment and presentation, Torre Abbey will continue to play a significant role in promoting tourism, combating economic deprivation, and in engendering a sense of well-being and local identity."

Contributions to the £6.5 million total cost will come from the council's capital fund (£631,000), English Heritage (£360,000) and money raised from the Friends of Torre Abbey (£120,000) and the remainder is being sought from other external funding sources.

Councillor Chris Lomas, Executive Member for Learning and Cultural Services said: "This highly significant award of £4.9 million makes the Torre Abbey project one of the largest heritage projects ever in Torbay.

"There nevertheless remains a significant capital shortfall of £590,000. Torbay Council has been working relentlessly with the Friends of Torre Abbey to secure the completion of the project and have recently been awarded £100,000 from the Garfield Weston Foundation bringing the shortfall to £490,000. It is hoped the additional funding will come from other sources such as local businesses who will recognise it as a significant investment, not only for Torbay's future generations but also for the many thousands of visitors we welcome to the area every year."

Torre Abbey is currently offering free admission to visitors until Sunday 14 November 2004 during this time the Abbey will be open seven days a week from 9.30am until 5.00pm. A private, closing ceremony luncheon will be taking place on Wednesday 10 November 2004

starting at 12.30pm and will be attended by David Suchet and patrons of the project. Local residents and visitors are invited to attend the 'locking of the door' ceremony taking place at 1.30pm where David Suchet will lock the grand doors and retain the key until the official opening ceremony following the refurbishment work.

Ends