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Lottery could decide Norwood House destiny

By Staff Copy

A LAST-ditch bid to save one of Beverley's most precious buildings for community use has been made to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The trustees of Norwood House have submitted a bid for almost £1m in funding from the Lottery, whose support is crucial if they are to achieve their goal of restoring the Georgian Grade 1 listed building for the community.

Now they are hoping to hear within the next six months whether the first phase of their bid for funding towards the £2.3m scheme is successful.

Jill Taylor, chairman of the trustees, said they had been working on the project for six years, and it had taken around two years to prepare the Lottery bid.

"We are actively applying to other funders, but they are all sitting on their hands until they see what the Lottery does. If we don't get the Lottery money we can't go ahead and the property will be sold," she said.

East Riding Council, which owns the historic building, has offered the charity group a 125-year lease on the building at a peppercorn rent. But the council has already told the trustees it is likely to offer the property for sale on the open market if their bid for external funding is unsuccessful.

Norwood House, built around 1760 as a private house, was latterly used as part of the adjoining Beverley High School, but has stood empty for a number of years.

It has been described by experts as one of the finest Georgian buildings outside London, but has become dilapidated and last year it was included for the first time in English Heritage's list of buildings at risk of decay.

If the Lottery bid is successful, the trustees are planning to restore many of its historic rooms and open them to the public. Some rooms would be available for functions and meetings, and an original kitchen area will be restored for visits by school parties and demonstrations.

It is also planned to open a themed restaurant, while the gardens would also be restored.

The top floor of the building would be available for offices, and the trustees have already secured an 'anchor' tenant which would provide them with a yearly income.

"We are confident that the scheme will work and pay its way, but it is a problem getting the capital funding to do it," said Mrs Taylor. "There is a lot of competition for a limited pot of money. In our eyes it is a good bid, but it is now in the the lap of the gods, unless we find a benevolent millionaire."

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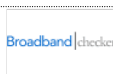
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