

A HISTORIC Little Lever church at the heart of the local community has been awarded a £100,000 grant towards safeguarding the building's future.

St Matthew's Church, in Market Street in the centre of the village, is 153-years old and a quarter of the way through a £1 million building renovation programme on the Victorian Gothic structure.

The current phase of building work – the second of five - involves waterproofing and upgrading the landmark stone tower, built 100 years ago to commemorate local people who died in World War 1. This phase alone costs £270,000.

However, the Church PCC and congregation have been delighted to learn that their bid to Viridor Credits Environmental Company has been successful.

Gareth Williams, Operations Manager for Viridor Credits, said "this project impressed the Viridor Credits Board by its scope and focus on the community. The opportunity to preserve this fantastic building as well as securing its future for the community was easily taken by the Board, with an offer of our maximum grant."

The grant offers significant help to the current and future plans of this busy High Anglican church, which has a regular congregation of around 110 adults and up to 40 children.

The nearby church hall is a venue for activities from baby ballet and yoga classes to Irish dancing and Zumba. This year, a monthly Luncheon Club and Messy Church sessions have been added to our regular programme. Liturgy is celebrated in its church building seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Mark Brocklebank, the church's treasurer and organist, commented: "This is a wonderful boost for our refurbishment plans and enables us to continue with the current phase of much-needed work.

"The renovation programme is a major project for our church but everyone is behind the scheme and it will ensure St Matthew's continues to be an important part of community life in Little Lever."

St Matthew's Vicar, Father John Wiseman, stated: "I am extremely grateful for the confidence Viridor Credits has shown us in making this significant grant.

"I am proud of St Matthew's because the people, through service and outreach, make the building the living heart of the community. Long may they continue."