

Lydeard St Lawrence Church Development Project

The story so far – June 2019

A project team was set up in February 2017, initially to look at the installation of toilet facilities. This remit expanded as the project progressed and links between the wider issues became apparent. We are committed to making the church more suitable for use by the community in the 21st century whilst protecting its 14th Century heritage, as a place of worship and a community asset.



The project team is made up of volunteers, plus our church architect, newly appointed in 2017.

Key to the project so far has been involving the community, to see what activities the community might use the building for - and to check what facilities would be required. We also consulted early with the Diocesan Advisory Committee, to get advice and check that anything we proposed would be likely to be acceptable from a conservation and heritage point of view.

During 2018 we ran a community engagement project with funding from a Big Lottery “awards for all” grant. Our opinion survey received 103 responses, almost all very supportive of our draft proposals, and including some helpful suggestions.

We have revised our Master Plan accordingly, with more detail about the planned changes. We have divided the project into eight elements that could be progressed either together or individually. These are as follows.

1. Removal of the benches at the front of the nave and installation of a dais to match floor levels.
2. Installation of a water supply and drainage arrangements.
3. Installation of an accessible w/c at the base of the tower.

4. Installation of a servery at the west end of the north aisle and removal of benches at the west end of the nave to provide a gathering space.
5. Installation of new radiators to improve the heating system.
6. Making the south porch the main entrance.
7. Re-arrangement of the vestry and furniture to re-purpose some of the recovered historic woodwork.
8. Provision of flexible seating and storage.

Our next stage is to start the formal consultation process and the faculty application using an updated Statement of Need and the new Master Plan. We are aware that we need to clear some of the unknowns before permission will be granted, so further survey work is required. We would also like to demonstrate some ongoing progress to the community. We are seeking a further “awards for all” grant to pay for:

1. the detailed design work and professional assistance to consult with the various regulatory organisations,
2. further survey work to determine the best location for the foul drainage from the new facilities and for the work required to the church floor where it is covered by the pew stands,
3. outside work to form a connection to the water supply and drainage,
4. the provision of a dais and the removal of some pews on a trial basis to allow the church to be used for entertainment, music and other performances, the most popular of the new activities highlighted by the opinion survey.

Once all the permissions are in place, we will need funding through grants, fund raising events and donations to pay for the major work. We anticipate a cost in the region of £120,000, though this is likely to vary depending on what we uncover during the survey work. The Parochial Church Council has set up a special bank account for the project and has started to put income from donations and fund-raising aside ready to be used as match funding for grants.