

Lydeard St Lawrence Church Development Project

The story so far – July 2021



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 last version of “the story so far” was published two years ago. It explained how we got to the point of having a “Master Plan” ready to start looking for the formal approvals and permissions. This was informed by the local opinion survey that we did in 2018. Since then, we have been working on the details, thanks to a second “Awards for all” grant from the National Lottery.

This has taken much longer than we ever expected, partly due to the effects of Covid 19 on all our lives, but also because we wanted to make sure that what we propose will give the best possible outcomes.

In practical terms we have:

- negotiated our proposed changes with the consultees and adjusted our design accordingly,
- done more survey work to design the drainage system,
- applied for and obtained a license to discharge from the Environment Agency,
- surveyed the floor beneath the pew stands to check what flooring specification will be required if they are removed,
- made more space at the front of the church for performances and ceremonies by removing the front pew, with a temporary permission from the Archdeacon,
- moved the altar cloth storage box out of the vestry and re-arranged the furniture in the vestry ready to make space for the accessible toilet.

Our Master Plan now has much more detail, following feedback from Historic England, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Victorian Society and the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC).

George Chedburn, our conservation architect, has been key in bringing the information and advice together and responding in a positive way. He has provided the drawings and schedules that we need to explain what we plan to do and to convince the consultees that we will protect the building's heritage. We also have an archaeologist ready to advise us and to protect anything that we find whilst digging.

The latest news is that the DAC is happy with our proposals, and we can advertise them formally. If no objections are received the application will be presented for approval by the Chancellor of the Bath and Wells Diocese in September.

The next job is to raise the funding necessary for the main work to take place. We expect this work to cost about £120,000 though current trends in the construction industry may push this higher. We are working on a Heritage Lottery application as the outcomes that they are promoting fit in well with our project. We also need to engage again with local organisations who might be using the facilities in the church in future, so that we can build their ambitions into our programme of activities.