

Lydeard St Lawrence Church Development Project



The story so far – 2023

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.

We have achieved a great deal but there is more to do. We have: -

- looked at other church buildings in Somerset where improvements have been made,
- done a survey to see what the local community would like to use the church for and what facilities they would like to see,
- successfully bid for lottery money to develop the design,
- come up with a plan that addresses the ambitions expressed in the survey responses,
- discussed options with the various regulatory organisations,
- prepared documents to justify our proposed changes and show how the building's heritage will be protected,
- commissioned a conservation architect to do a detailed design,
- got the necessary permissions (including a faculty, the equivalent of planning permission) to carry out the work,
- applied to the Heritage Lottery for a grant to pay for the work, not successful, but with some positive feedback and an invitation to apply again.

Feedback from the Heritage Lottery explained that our plan did not hit the mandatory outcome, 'a wider range of people will be involved in heritage' really hard. Our project does not make a strong and compelling case that we will reach a wider range of people.

We have been looking at some of the projects recently funded by the Heritage Lottery. The successful projects focus on activities that bring a building's history and its current significance to a wider audience. The provision of the facilities is a side issue, justified by the activities they make possible.

We have been working with the school to explore how the heritage fits in to the children's lessons and how their families might be involved. Other ideas include concerts, music lessons, walking tours, art and photography exhibitions, history talks, plays, bell ringing events, weddings and other special church services.

Our plan is to look for contacts and connections with organisations and individuals that will commit to new activities in the church (if the facilities are provided). We will use this evidence to help build our case ready for a new Heritage Lottery bid.