

Church of St Lawrence  
Lydeard St Lawrence

Church Development Project

Opinion Survey Report



January 2019

Compiled by Paul Yeomans

## Introduction

The Church Development project began as a proposal to provide toilet facilities in the church. It was soon apparent that this should be part of a wider project to make the church more adaptable and suitable for use in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The church is a beautiful medieval building with some significant architectural features. We understand the responsibility resting with the project team to avoid doing something that might damage that heritage.

We successfully bid for funding from the Big Lottery to pay for design work to inform what would be possible, and to facilitate this opinion survey to find out what the people who might potentially use the church thought of our ideas.

We worked with George Chedburn, our experienced conservation architect to develop some options. We met with the Diocesan Advisory Committee (the people who would ultimately decide if a faculty should be granted) to get their views.

The survey was launched using a display of drawings showing various options and a questionnaire. It was introduced at the church fete in the summer and at other village events later in 2018. In between events the display and questionnaire forms were in the church so that casual visitors could respond. The drawings, information and questionnaire were also available online via the village web site.

## The questionnaire

The questions that we asked focussed on the additional use that would be made of the church if the various facilities that we proposed were introduced. We included some questions about current use, family connections and postal address to understand some background for the group that responded. We made inclusion of name and contact details optional so that those who preferred to be anonymous could still respond. An open question was included for comments and other suggestions.

A copy of the form is included as **Appendix A**.

## **The response**

We were delighted with the positive response to the survey and to our preferred option. Ours is a small village with about 350 residents. We had 103 responses, 68 on paper forms and 35 online. Each was transferred to a spreadsheet for analysis.

A summary of all the responses is included as **Appendix B**.

## **Location**

82 responders gave their full postcode. Of those 52 live within 3km of the church. A further 9 are from Bishops Lydeard and 4 in and around Taunton. The rest range from Minehead to Weston-Super-Mare, with one in Richmond Surrey and another as far away as Warrington, Cheshire.

## **Family connections**

15 of the responders have family connections with the church, most living nearby. Two of those living further away visit regularly because of family connections.

## **Current use of the church**

18 of the responders use the church once a fortnight or more. This group includes those attending services and those attending the weekly bell ringing practices. Most responders currently use the church between once a month and twice a year. These include those connected with the school (which uses the church for special assemblies several times each year), those with relatives buried in the churchyard and visiting bell ringers.

## **New activities**

The favourite new activity, with 77 responders saying that they might attend, was 'entertainment, music or other performances.' A close second was 'exhibitions of interest to visitors.' Specialist activities like bell ringing training courses and singing or music making courses also had solid support from those who might take part.

## **New facilities**

The favourite new facility, with 90 responders saying that it would make them more likely to use the church is an accessible toilet, followed by a servery and then improvements to the heating system. A few who already use the church frequently do not anticipate attending more often as a result of the new facilities, but their comments were supportive.

## Comments or other ideas

This section of the questionnaire provided some valuable feedback. 66 of the responders included comments. None of the responses showed significant objections to the proposals and most show solid support for our preferred option.

There were some positive ideas to add to the plans, including retaining an area and facilities specifically for children, the provision of wi-fi, and about making sure that the doors leading to the accessible toilet are not awkward for someone in a wheelchair.

There were also several individual suggestions;

- a regular “market” for surplus fruit, vegetables and handicrafts,
- a licenced bar,
- solar panels could be fitted if work is needed on the roof,
- a better PA system,
- a water bowl for dogs.

Two comments expressed concerns about the removal of the pews – from the point of view of seating capacity and the ambience of the church. One mentioned that the surface of the footpath to the north door is slippery when wet.

Here is a small selection of comments that reflect the nature of the feedback.

- *Church has looked sad and neglected in the past, good to see current enthusiasm to integrate with other village activities Option 5 looks appropriate.*
- *Very good ideas - well thought out. Hope it will happen soon! Particularly loo and a tap!*
- *Having a toilet, server and meeting space would certainly encourage bellringers to use the church more often for courses and training. Over 150 course modules (each three hours long) are arranged in the Taunton Branch each year with only two or three being arranged at Lydeard St Lawrence due to the lack of the above facilities. Many more could be based here with improved facilities.*
- *Spent about an hour inspecting church and grounds with Chedburn Dudley plans. Impressed both by the quality of the plans and the thought put into this reordering. I particularly like the proposal that the main entrance be move to the south door.*

The full list of comments is included in a table as **Appendix C**

# Lydeard St Lawrence Church Development Project

# Appendix A

Please take a look at the plans and read the story so far before filling out this questionnaire...

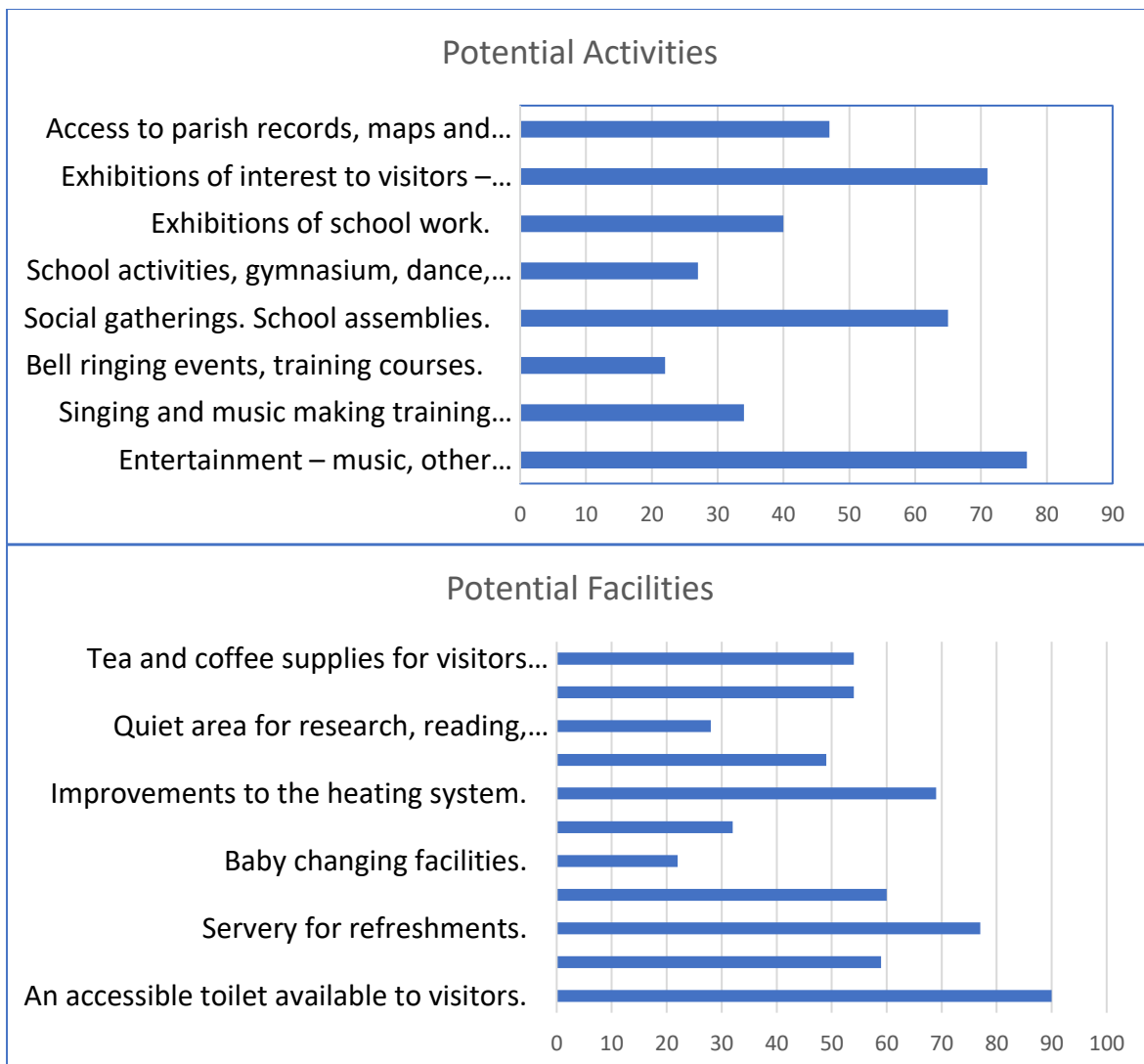
<p><i>How often do you currently use the church? (Please tick one box.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> once a fortnight or more</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> about monthly</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> about twice a year</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> less than that</li> </ul>	<p><i>Do you have family connections/ ancestors associated with the church? (Please tick one box.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> yes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> no</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> not sure</li> </ul>
<p><i>What new activities might you attend at the church? (Tick as many as you like.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment – music, other performances.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Singing and music making training courses.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Bell ringing events, training courses.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Social gatherings. School assemblies.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> School activities, gymnasium, dance, performance.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Exhibitions of school work.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Exhibitions of interest to visitors – historical, artistic, local business etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Access to parish records, maps and other reference documents</li> </ul>	<p><i>What new facilities would make you more likely to use the church? (Tick as many as you like.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> An accessible toilet available to visitors.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Space at the front of the church for performance and ceremony.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Servery for refreshments.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Gathering space with tables and chairs for informal events and training courses.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Baby changing facilities.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Switch to the south door as the main entrance, with accessible ramps and doors.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Improvements to the heating system.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Church and village history display.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Quiet area for research, reading, training etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Walking route maps joining other churches or places of interest.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tea and coffee supplies for visitors available when the church is open.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Do you have any comments on the plans or other ideas we may have missed?</i></p>	
<p><i>To help us understand the spread of respondents please let us have your postcode (Optional).</i></p>	<p>Postcode</p>
<p><i>If you would like to be kept in touch as the project progresses, please let us have your name and e-mail or postal address. (Optional).</i></p>	<p>Name e-mail or address</p>

Thank you for your time and for sharing your views. Please return this form to the church or to one of the project team.

Our church is always open in daylight hours and everyone is welcome to visit it at any time. This essential preparatory work and questionnaire is possible through the grant provided by the Big Lottery fund - so thank you to all National Lottery players.



<b>Total number of responses</b>	103
<b>How often do you currently use the church?</b>	
Once a fortnight or more	18
about monthly	29
about twice a year	42
less than twice a year	14
<b>Do you have family connections/ ancestors associated with the church?</b>	
Yes	15
No	81
Not sure	4
<b>What new activities might you attend at the church?</b>	
Entertainment – music, other performances.	77
Singing and music making training courses.	34
Bell ringing events, training courses.	22
Social gatherings. School assemblies.	65
School activities, gymnasium, dance, performance.	27
Exhibitions of school work.	40
Exhibitions of interest to visitors – historical, artistic, local business etc.	71
Access to parish records, maps and other reference documents	47
<b>What new facilities would make you more likely to use the church?</b>	
An accessible toilet available to visitors.	90
Space at the front of the church for performance and ceremony.	59
Servery for refreshments.	77
Gathering space with tables and chairs for informal events and training courses.	60
Baby changing facilities.	22
Switch to the south door as the main entrance, with accessible ramps and doors.	32
Improvements to the heating system.	69
Church and village history display.	49
Quiet area for research, reading, training etc.	28
Walking route maps joining other churches or places of interest.	54
Tea and coffee supplies for visitors available when the church is open.	54



...

1	Prefer option 5
2	Prefer option 5 but concerned about removal of pews and seating capacity for parents so chairs required. Facilities for messy church.
3	Prefer option 5 - like south porch entrance - need to ensure that the gathering area doesn't become a storage area.
4	Prefer option 5. Access to toilet, doors should open the same way for wheelchair users. Chairs should be easy to stack.
5	Like option 5
6	Toilets essential, communal meeting area a good idea, making the church accessible is very worthwhile.
7	Need better facilities for children. Messy Church etc. In favour of the most popular design
8	Option 5, particularly south porch entrance. Better PA system for school activities.
9	Church has looked sad and neglected in the past, good to see current enthusiasm to integrate with other village activities Option 5 looks appropriate.
10	Good Luck
11	Very well presented alternatives. Change to south door if it improves heating.
12	Study groups or PCC away days
13	Very positive project
14	Prefer option 5
15	All good ideas for widening uses.
16	On the right track. Suggest add wi-fi.
17	Anything that gets the church used more would be good
18	All the ideas seem good to me. I would be happy to be in church more often if there were something on there.
19	What will happen to the teddy bears in the children's area?
20	Generally the proposed changes are good. More open space and using the south door.
21	The proposal is well thought out and will be a great benefit to the parish.
22	Excellent and much needed.
23	An area for children to play, be entertained during services.
24	A good idea, a sign of the times.
25	These are excellent and comprehensive plans
26	I think it is a very good idea and would work well
27	I think the walking route idea is inspired
28	Very good ideas - well thought out. Hope it will happen soon! Particularly loo and a tap!
29	Well done
30	I like the proposals, especially the extra space in the Nave and the toilet/ water proposal.
31	It is vital the Church is used more especially by the children.
32	In this day and age water and loo
33	Having a toilet, server and meeting space would certainly encourage bellringers to use the church more often for courses and training. Over 150 course modules (each three hours long) are arranged in the Taunton Branch each year with only two or three being arranged at Lydeard St Lawrence due to the lack of the above facilities. Many more could be based here with improved facilities.
34	Having to move the proposed toilet to lower the bells for maintenance as in a couple of the plans sounds a distinct disadvantage



## Opinion Survey Comments

## Appendix C

35	With my wife as a full-time wheelchair user I'm particularly interested in the Toilet arrangements. I consider option 3/4 better for access than the preferred option 5 as it will not involve reversing down a narrow access. Otherwise option 5 looks good.
36	I like the latest iteration the best
37	Spent about an hour inspecting church wand grounds with Chedburn Dudley plans. Impressed both by the quality of the plans and the thought put into this reordering. I particularly like the proposal that the main entrance be move to the south door.
38	A regular 'market' for residents' excess fruit and veg, handicrafts, etc.? I think churches used to be used in this way.
39	The plans sound great, hopefully lots of advertising and encouragement for people to come to this beautiful place of worship and history, now and for the future.
40	No
41	If you are selling pews make sure you get a good price.
42	Favour Plan 5
43	Very comprehensive, hope all is achieved.
44	I would like to see a laminated (or similar) tour of the church that visitors can use to browse round the church.
45	All look good - option 2 preferred
46	Yes, feel option 5 is the best and suitable option.
47	Plan 5 looks ideal to meet all sorts of community needs
48	I agree with the preferred plans for change.
49	Wi-fi provision Shop facilities - maybe at some point in the future Licensed bar area Solar panels, if roof is replaced in the future
50	It would be useful to understand what type of events / display and uses are intended for the church. Also what relationships with School and other village stakeholders at to be made and maintained.
51	Would free WiFi be possible, maybe would attract some who would not consider going into the Church
52	I fully support option 5
53	Plans look excellent. Would like to see an updated hand held guide to use when walking round the church.
54	Think the plans are great, need to avoid covering the Hancock memorial
55	Water Loo
56	Water and Toilet
57	Toilet
58	Water
59	Toilet, Water
60	Is it necessary to remove pews at the back and the front of the church, Chairs will never be as nice. Moving the entrance will feel counter intuitive. Keep the new one for weddings. Otherwise plans seem positive and sensitive.
61	Solar panels? Better exterior and interior lighting
62	We don't attend but master plan would be of great benefit
63	Water bowl for dogs
64	Master plan works well for me
65	The footpath to the church is slippery when wet.
66	Use of the Church for school events its great to have the whole school in one place.