

St Leonard's Sheepstor

Restoration and Development Project

Newsletter: 1

Background

1. Now that the project is really beginning to gather pace it seems sensible to offer a more regular flow of information on what is happening. So I will try to send out Newsletters reasonably frequently telling you what is happening, reporting on costs and fundraising, and seeking advice on aspects of the planning.
2. Just to remind you what is happening let's take a step back:
 - 2.1. The January 2014 Quinquennial Inspection told us that we had some urgent work to do to stop the Dartmoor weather getting in, principally to the tower roof, the porch roof, the gutters and the pointing. Any of you who have been into the church in recent weeks will have seen the problem in the pools of water on the floors.
 - 2.2. We also want to develop the Lady Chapel to offer exhibitions to visitors and improve the way the Nave can be used for concerts. But we cannot do this until the building is weather proof.
 - 2.3. We successfully applied to the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme for a grant to re-roof the tower and mend the porch roof together with new gutters all round.
 - 2.4. And because of all this we have split the work into three phases:
 - 2.4.1. Phase 1: Tower roof, porch roof, gutters.
 - 2.4.2. Phase 2: External pointing and gable ends.
 - 2.4.3. Phase 3: Internal development of Lady Chapel and Nave.
3. The rest of this Newsletter covers progress with Phase 1.

Tendering

4. We tendered the work for Phase 1 in December and just before Christmas were able to appoint as builders Ryearch who have recently completed work on Walkhampton Church
5. They will:
 - 5.1. reroof the tower in new slate with a wider drainage gulley and improve the roof to the stairs to stop water coming down the stairs;
 - 5.2. Repair the porch roof where it meets the church wall to stop damp affecting the Sarawak memorials inside;
 - 5.3. Replace the gutters in cast iron;
 - 5.4. Widen the gulley between the tower and south aisle roof which drains the main roof and fit a new hopper to collect the rainwater coming off this gulley.

6. The tower will be completely scaffolded during work, with a temporary roof, but the sides will not be sheeted. At times scaffolding may also be used around the porch and to give access to the gutters.

Construction

7. We expect scaffolding to begin to go up later this month, January, and the work should be completed by the end of April. Natural England has asked for this so that the Natterer Bat breeding colony in the tower is not disturbed.
8. The village hall committee has kindly made the hall available for the builders to use as a rest/ refreshment site which avoids having to have a porta cabin and porta loos on site.
9. Health and Safety rules mean that there will need to be some fencing around the part of the churchyard used by the builders close to the base of the tower.
10. We have stressed that the surface of the approach to the church is weak and not suitable for heavy vehicles but it will be needed for access so please note that parking on the church path in working hours will not be possible.
11. We will be asking the builders to park in Portland Lane and avoid congestion in the centre of the village.
12. We will shortly be having an initial site meeting with the builders and the professional team and would be happy to explore any other specific points anyone suggests to make the work as impact free as possible for the village.
13. Services and other uses of the church out of normal working hours can go ahead as normal but if anyone needs to use the church in normal working hours, for example for a wedding or funeral, special arrangements will need to be made to pause building work so please let me know.

Looking ahead

14. I have tried to keep this newsletter short and have left out information on costs and funding. I will circulate a second newsletter soon covering this.
15. And we have now begun work on planning Phases 2 and 3 which we want to do together and for which we want to seek Heritage Lottery Funding. More news on this in due course.
16. In the meantime Happy New Year to all.

Richard Bayly

11-1-2016