

22 March 2010

KILDWICK CHURCH CANCELS BUILDING DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The project to provide new community facilities at St Andrew's Church, Kildwick has been cancelled due to the extended legal process and the difficulty of raising external funds.

The church's Parochial Church Council made the decision to withdraw the plans in the best interests of the congregation, and the ongoing mission and ministry of the local church.

Plans were first submitted in early 2007 which aimed to provide facilities including disabled access, flexible worship and meeting spaces, efficient heating and lavatory and kitchen facilities.

The hope was that the building could then be used much more by church and community based organisations, thus providing both an attractive and comfortable venue for social events and worship and a source of income to contribute to the maintenance of the Grade 1 listed building.

These proposals gained the approval of the national amenity societies as well as Craven District Council and the Bradford Diocesan Advisory Committee. However, following formal objections lodged by 11 local residents the application for a faculty (church planning permission) was forced to go before the Consistory Court of the Diocese of Bradford.

In October 2008 His Honour Judge John Walford, Chancellor of the Diocese, who had been asked to adjudicate on the changes, decided that he could not at that time rule on specific elements of the plans due to the "extraordinary economic climate". He wanted to ensure that sufficient funding would be available and would therefore give the church and its supporters until the end of 2010 to raise funds before delivering his final ruling.

Although the October 2008 ruling provided approval in principle for the plans it soon emerged that potential donors were unwilling to commit funds until specific approval was given. This had the effect of restricting fundraising to donations from the congregation and local fundraising events until permission for the changes was given.

In response to the Chancellor's concerns, an amended scheme was submitted in July 2009 which was a much smaller subset of the scheme originally proposed. It was designed to be implemented in discrete phases as funding became available and sought to address the concerns of those people in the community who believed the original changes were too extensive.

The decision to cancel the project and allow a period to reflect and concentrate on the mission and ministry of the Church was taken after Judge Walford directed in February this year that a further round of representations on the amended scheme should be made by the national amenity societies and those who continue to formally oppose the plans.

Speaking on behalf of the Parochial Church Council, the Reverend Robin Figg, Vicar of St Andrew's, said, "The Council's decision to cancel the project was extremely difficult, but it was unanimous and took into account the effect of the continuing legal and economic uncertainty. This environment makes it unrealistic to continue with a project which has already been running for six years and had the prospect of continuing for several more. We have decided the time has come to call a halt and give time to concentrate on our mission and ministry".

The Parochial Church Council now intends to await a review by the diocese of the current stock of its church buildings to provide some guidance as to an alternative way forward. In its present form and without the increased usage and income that the development would have provided St. Andrew's is too large and expensive to maintain for the size of congregation supporting it.

ENDS

Notes for editors

- St. Andrew's Church, Kildwick is a Grade 1 listed building dating back to the 14th century. During its history the building has seen many changes. The present nave pews date from the 1860/70s. The last major works took place in 1901-3 to repair and improve the existing arrangement of the building, especially the nave and chancel pillars and chancel roof. The work also included relocating the nave pews on the present wooden platform which was built onto a new concrete raft.
- The changes proposed in early 2007 were the culmination of thoughts and plans which had evolved from discussions which had taken place over a number of years. They were designed to satisfy the needs of the church in the 21st century and, whilst extensive, had gained the support of all of the relevant national amenity societies following several on site meetings with their representatives.
- The amended plans submitted in July 2009 were a much reduced subset and the minimum considered necessary by the Parochial Church Council to meet the current and future mission and ministry needs of the church community. Changes were

restricted to the nave and tower area to provide more flexible space, a new heating system, disabled access into and within the church, a single toilet and an enclosed kitchen cabinet. Pews were to be retained in the central nave (the removal of all the Victorian pews in the original scheme being one of the main concerns of those opposed to the original scheme). The amended plans continued to be formally opposed by eleven local residents.

- The national amenity societies are English Heritage, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the Victorian Society.