

Parish Church of Saint Peter, Stanton Lacy

Faculty Petition for the Installation of Kitchen and Toilet Facilities

STATEMENT OF NEEDS

1. General Information

The Grade I Saxon Church of St Peter has been serving the parish of Stanton Lacy since the early 11th century. It is part of the Diocese of Hereford, the second most rural Diocese in the Church of England (measured by population density) with the lowest population per church of all CofE dioceses¹.

It is located in south Shropshire, 3 miles north of the town of Ludlow. The village itself is very small and the parish extends across a further 8 settlements with a total population of CIRCA 370. Around 24% of the population are aged 65 or over compared to a national average of 19%²

According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, Stanton Lacy is in the top 1.5% of the most deprived of all Church of England parishes in terms of its access to local services³. Community connection is therefore very important for such an area and the church is well placed for providing opportunities for people to meet locally and to engage together in activity.

The Church is home to a range of activities throughout the year. We;

- Provide four church services per month with special services at key festival times
- Conduct life events including baptism, weddings and funerals as well as provide the pastoral care for these events
- Run community events – such as concerts and exhibitions
- Host larger-scale events – such as the Snowdrop Weekend

In addition, we;

- Deliver pastoral visiting and mission giving
- Support local schools and the spiritual development of children and nurture young people for confirmation
- Provide volunteering opportunities
- Host a wide range of visitors – walking tours, cycling tours, archaeological visits
- Provide information leaflets for visitors and contribute to local communications, including newsletters and through social media and the Church's website

¹ Detailed Diocesan tables from Statistics form Mission - Church of England – 2022

<https://www.churchofengland.org/about/data-services/key-areas-research#church-attendance-statistics>

² Census 2021 – ‘Voices of our ageing population: Living longer lives’ - Office For National Statistics

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/voicesofourageingpopulation/livinglongerlives#:~:text=The%20population%20of%20England%20and,the%20previous%20census%20in%20201>

³ Parish Indices of Deprivation 2019. Church of England, <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/policy-andthinking/research-and-statistics/resources-publications-and-data#na>

- Work collaboratively with a range of organisations including the Deanery, Synod, Caring for God's Acre, the Shropshire Historic Churches Trust and the Stanton Lacy Village Hall Committee
- Maintain this Grade 1 listed building - a historic treasure and a landmark in the local area.

Stanton Lacy has no shops, library, pub or restaurant. The Church remains the only communal space in the village, the Village Hall itself being situated some 3 miles away.

2. What we need

The PCC is keen to secure the future of St Peter's against a backdrop of broader change. The Taylor Review⁴ identified key trends affecting the long-term sustainability of churches, including reduced congregation size, especially of older people, and reduced funding availability for church repairs. St Peter's is beginning to experience both these factors. We need to be able to attract a wider population to sustain the congregation and, as suggested by the Taylor report, we need to open up the building to wider community use, to generate income.

For these changes to be possible, one of the key changes we need to make is to ensure that the building becomes user friendly by installing some basic facilities – a kitchen and toilet, neither of which we have at present.

3. The proposals

The detail of the work proposed is included in the Specification that accompanies this Faculty Petition. In summary, the key elements of the work will comprise the;

- Installation of kitchen and toilet facilities
- Creation of an inner glazed entrance lobby with automatic doors
- Re-location of the font
- Installation of a mains water supply
- Installation of a Trench-Arch drainage system in the churchyard

We will create an enclosed space within the SW corner of the nave to accommodate a toilet. It will be fully accessible to people with mobility difficulties including wheelchair users.

The partition wall will be angled at the west end of the nave so as to preserve the view of the stained-glass window there. The height of the partition will match that of the new lobby (see below) and design details will continue across the whole width. An open plan kitchen will be built on the outside of the partition wall, extending to the main pillar. The work area over the cabinets will have a retractable lid to cover them when not in use.

We are taking the opportunity to create a new internal lobby for the church. Access to the toilet will be via this new lobby, so will not open directly into the nave. The lobby will be built to the same height as the toilet enclosure and extend

⁴ The Taylor Review: Sustainability of English Churches and Cathedrals December 2018, DCMS
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/669667/Taylor_Review_Final.pdf

approximately 1m further into the nave than the current inner doors. Those doors will be removed and the outer doors will be re-hung to open outwards. This will ensure appropriate circulation space within the new lobby. The lobby itself will be glazed and have automatic sliding doors.

As well as providing discreet access to the toilet, the lobby will have a number of advantages for the church as a whole. The automatic doors will ensure improved access for those with mobility difficulties, including wheelchair users. In addition, the thermal properties of the material used will reduce current heat loss through the main entrance; and the glazing itself will enable more natural light into the church as the outer doors can remain open when the building is in use.

Our preferred location for the new kitchen and toilet facilities will require the relocation of the font. The font had been previously located in two other places within the church prior to its move to its current location during the Victorian era. The scheme will now involve returning it to a former location, where it will be more visible and easier for the congregation to participate in ceremonial activity there.

The church has no mains water so a new supply will be installed on site to service the kitchen and toilet. The pipework will be routed under the main pathway to minimise the risk of disturbing any archaeology. Drainage from the kitchen and toilet, will be facilitated by a Trench-Arch system. Where there is no mains sewage available, this system provides an alternative to the use of septic tanks. It suits low volume usage, and is increasingly being used by churches as its relatively shallow depth reduces the risks from excavation in churchyards. The system planned for St Peter's will be 10.5m long x 1m wide x 400mm deep and will be installed underneath a current pathway.

4. Why this and why now?

The PCC does not believe that St Peter's is at immediate risk of closure. But, we do not want to wait until it is. The reductions in congregation size and reduced income that have affected so many places of worship elsewhere are beginning to have an impact at St Peter's. The PCC does not want to wait until the problem becomes insurmountable and wishes to be pro-active in finding solutions.

The PCC's aims here are to sustain an active congregation membership and to encourage wider and more frequent use of the church. In the process, this will help with the long-term goal of securing a future St Peter's – in effect, creating a virtuous circle.

The key remains the provision of basic facilities – a kitchen and toilet – to encourage more people to use the building;

- The development and growth of a wider programme of events, which aims to support and engage the community, is critically dependent on having these facilities.
- The lack of any toilet is a barrier for some to attend services and events here, particularly for families and the more senior and makes most opportunities simply not viable for the church to host in the longer term. Even small group meetings opt not to use the space because of the lack of facilities here.
- Large events can only be held infrequently since there are considerable difficulties in accommodating bigger audiences on-site. The church has to hire in portable toilet facilities for any major event, which is not a long-term

sustainable solution. Water has to be brought onto the site and waste water removed manually.

- The church's ancient Saxon origins mean that it is visited by tourists to the Shropshire Hills and by parties interested in architecture and history. The church is promoted as part of the Shropshire Churches Tourism Group and is advertised on the Explore Churches website which promotes days out. We feel unable to develop this offer further because of a lack of facilities.
- The acoustic quality of the church means it is especially suited to musical events and we do currently organise 3 to 4 each year. With these facilities, this could be significantly greater, with links to the local Arts community in Ludlow. In addition, a local choir has indicated interest in use of the church as a practice space, on the assumption that these facilities become available

5. Evidence

The PCC held a number of discussions locally in the lead up to an earlier scheme in 2019. These and current demands from the range of current users – from the congregation, to those attending events, to visitors to the church and churchyard and even the bell ringing team - all re-inforce the demand for kitchen and toilet facilities. It is becoming especially important for older people and families in helping to retain and/or re-introduce them to services.

Also, as indicated, we know of some potential additional demand based on the potential for more on-site events, especially those with musical content. We have tested the potential for other types of activity – such as poetry readings and exhibitions - by having limited events on site, all of which show interest in future events.

In addition, the PCC is also aware of the survey⁵ reported by the NCT on the beneficial impact of toilet facilities on congregation size – 34% of those asked said that toilets would encourage them to visit a church, chapel or meeting house. Finally, of course, the recommendations of the Taylor report remain to be implemented locally. Opening the church to wider activity will help to secure its future; but we will not succeed without the presence of basic facilities on site to encourage attendance.

6. Contribution to Environmental Sustainability

There are two key features of the development which will make a significant contribution to environmental sustainability by reducing the Church's carbon footprint on a recurring basis;

- Trench-Arch drainage system - in addition to being less costly to create and having no running costs, these systems represent a 'green' solution to the disposal of waste water. Liquids soak away naturally into the soil and solids are digested by worms, who over time turn it into new soil matter
- New lobby – the existing inner doors are badly fitting and result in significant draughts in and heat loss from the nave. They have to be propped open at times of service or events as they are very difficult to open, especially with a succession of people entering and leaving the building. The new lobby will be

⁵ National Churches Trust <https://www.nationalchurchestrust.org/get-support/buildings-maintenance/toilets>

made of thermal glass, thus minimising any heat loss. In addition, the doors will slide open and have automatic controls, further limiting any heat loss by avoiding the need to prop the doors open. There will be a small positive impact from a reduced demand for lighting. The thermal properties of the new lobby will mean the outer doors of the church can stay open in all but the worst weather. This will add light to the nave and reduce the need for artificial lighting.

7. Other options considered

Other options available to the PCC were as follows;

- **Do nothing** – clearly, this will not address the risk to the long-term future of St Peter’s and is an option that the PCC does not wish to pursue
- **Permanent Toilet Hire** – such facilities have been hired by the PCC and have been helpful on a short-term basis. Their permanent use has a number of drawbacks., It would be expensive and create an unsightly addition to the churchyard. They remain difficult to use for older/disabled attendees and do not represent an environmentally friendly option. We would still have no kitchen facilities.
- **Install facilities in other parts of the church** – there are other locations in the church which have been considered. An earlier version of the scheme concluded that the proposed location in the SW of the nave was the optimum in terms of cost and impact on the church. Two other firms of architects have reviewed the situation recently and have both agreed with the original assessment
- **Create a purpose-built extension** - the PCC is aware that this is an option that other churches have adopted. In the case of St Peter’s, it was dismissed due to potentially significant cost, the impact on the church building (Grade 1 Listed) and the impact on the churchyard. The PCC is also aware that this option is only likely to be supported if all other options have been dismissed. The PCC feels it has produced a workable and acceptable option by building these facilities within the church itself

8. Conclusion

St Peter’s benefits from a currently active congregation and PCC. The church has regular services, is involved in the wider parish community and hosts a range of events each year. The PCC want this to continue. It wants to retain and grow the congregation, allow for the wider use of the church by the community and in the process offer easier physical access to the building itself.

The scheme of works set out in this Faculty Petition is intended to support these aims and, in the process, secure the long-term future of St Peter’s Church.