



PROJECT INSPIRE

- ◆ Conserving our heritage
- ◆ Making bold improvements
- ◆ Creating welcoming spaces
- ◆ Reducing our carbon footprint

UPDATE ON PROJECT FUNDING

The headline target for fundraising is £1.25m including VAT amounting to around £180k. Considerable progress has been made towards this target (including some contingency) – here are the main elements:

Trust Funds - £120,000 has been pledged to date. We are enormously grateful to the Benefact Trust for £48,500, the Beatrice Laing Trust for £25,000, the Joseph Rank Trust for £35,000, Gloucestershire Historic Churches Trust for £10,000 and three smaller grants amounting to £3,000.

Sale of Church Cottage – this is being handled by Moore, Allen & Innocent and is now on the market for £395,000.

The Heritage Lottery Fund has offered a wonderful £220,000: we are currently working through the conditions attached to this offer, and be in the position to accept it shortly

Church of England Net Carbon Zero Demonstrator Church scheme – a grant of £56,000.

Pledges from parishioners - £160,000 including Gift Aid to-date.

Fundraising events - over £25,000 has been raised in 2023/24.

There is a funding gap of £145,000. Of this, £115,000 is caused by changes to the VAT reimbursement scheme, which have drastically reduced the amount of VAT we can reclaim.

A letter from the Vicar was circulated around the time this newsletter is published; a copy is available on the church website Project Inspire page.

VAT

We were very concerned that HM Government might cease the Listed Places of Worship Scheme whereby VAT can be recovered. Despite many churches and others lobbying MPs it has been announced that churches can recover just £25k in 2025/26.

This accounts for the £115k portion of the funding gap mentioned above.

Two ways in which parishioners and members of the community can help bridge this gap are pledges and fundraising events – please see below.



The Burns Night Ceilidh

Pledges

We are immensely grateful for the many generous pledges received to-date; it is not too late to add to them. Pledges helped us demonstrate to the Chancellor that the parish backs this project as well as influencing trust funds which have made grants to the project.

Pledges can be made in installments and are a major contributor to our target and even more so if Gift Aid can be claimed.

Please speak to David Turtle or the Church Wardens for more information or pick up a brochure at the back of church.

Fundraising events

An imaginative programme of events has continued with the recent Burns Night ceilidh which was enjoyed by many parishioners and others. Our thanks go to those who planned and ran the occasion and to those who came along.

Details of all events can be found on the display boards in church and on the parish website.



The Jazz Concert

Our fundraising team has done a marvellous job and we are very grateful to them. Now, we would like to invite other parishioners to offer fundraising events. The current team can advise on good practice; please contact the Parish Office with ideas.

Net Carbon Zero

Our plans to achieve 'net carbon zero' include air source heat pumps with underfloor heating, solar panels on the south aisle roof and removal of the existing gas boilers. We made a bid for funding from the Church of England Net Carbon Zero Demonstrators' Project and we are pleased to report that the considerable effort that went in to this bid has been successful with £56k awarded.

Visits

Members of the project team have visited another church to look the project being undertaken. St Margaret's in Oxford is a similar size to ours and although a Victorian church it was useful to be able to discuss with the main contractor aspects of the work and any challenges that arose as the work progressed.

Next steps

As indicated above, the detailed design work undertaken by our conservation architects Chedburn Codd is well underway. The next stage will be to go through the various steps to select the main contractor. Then a start date can be set and the church closed to allow the work to commence.

Meanwhile, just to remind us all, our five key goals are provision of the following:

1. an open and welcoming space for flexible worship and community use;
2. level access for all abilities from the re-opened north porch to the communion rail;
3. shared spaces to make optimal use of the whole church building;
4. efficient energy use towards the Church of England 'net-zero' carbon reduction target by 2030; and
5. heritage conserved by careful design of internal changes.

Parishioners are asked to remember these drivers which form the basis of our project and to pray for the successful outcome that will deliver a renewed place of worship and mission in the heart of Lechlade.

*Newsletter No. 12 published Febuary 2025 by
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