

St Martin's Church Centre halls project update

Our church centre is an amazing facility but is in real need of a major refurbishment. The upper hall, which is a grade II listed building, is suffering from significant damp issues that's threatening the fabric of the building. Most of this is caused by problems with the roof, which is 159 years old!

The other issue is the gas heating system. The boiler in the upper hall was installed in 1989 and, according to our energy efficiency report, is "beyond the end of its serviceable life".

The full project

Rather than just tackling the damp problem and doing a like for like replacement of the heating system, we want to use these problems as an opportunity to make our halls net zero, in line with the Church of England's target to be net zero by 2030. We are also planning some major improvements as well, including creating a commercial level kitchen, improving all the toilets, refurbishing the youth club area (the Cellars), and building a mezzanine to create an extra two rooms. We will insulate the building fully, with internal wall insulation and secondary double glazing and install battery storage and renewable heating technology.

Our current focus

This is a massive project and will take several years to complete. We have broken the project down into phases, and our immediate focus is on re-roofing the hall, and embedding about 90 solar panels into the roof, in place of slates. We believe we can reuse around 70% of the slates, and with the panels replacing slates, we hope we will not need to buy any additional slates, and may even have some left over. We will repair or replace the guttering and downpipes, insulate the roof, and carry out some minor repair work to the walls and high-level windows whilst we have the scaffolding. The solar panels alone will get us 60% of the way to net zero for the hall.

Our finances

Our initial fundraising last year raised nearly £59,000 from donations, the crowdfunding grants and other activities. At the time of writing, we have received other grants and donations of nearly £40,000, against which we have spent £26,000. We have also allocated £30,000 of reserves to this project, giving us a fund of just over £100,000. The latest costings from our quantity surveyor suggests the roof and solar panels phase will cost nearly £400,000, including VAT, which we can reclaim under the Listed Places of Worship scheme. After reclaiming the VAT, this leaves us about £225,000 to find. We are actively applying for grant funding to close this gap. In the meantime, we will continue to fundraise for the project and seek donations.

Bats!

With an old building like ours, part of the requirement for planning permission is to conduct a bat survey. Our initial survey indicated that we do have some low-level evidence of bats, and we will need to carry out more detailed work to identify how many bats and which species are using the halls, and for what purpose (e.g. roosting, feeding and / or breeding). This will dictate what mitigation we need to build into the project. However, this initial survey has now allowed us to submit our application for planning and listed buildings consent.

Timing

One complication of bats is that it can restrict the timing of work as we can't disturb bats during hibernation, nor if they are using the hall as a breeding site. Our current target date for the roof works is March and April of 2025, assuming we can raise the necessary finance by then.

How can you help?

You can please pray for this project:

- That the planning application and listed buildings consent is received with no additional delays.
- That the additional bat survey does not show the site is being used for hibernation or as a site for breeding.
- That our application to become a demonstrator project for the Church of England is approved.
- That enough of our other grant applications are also approved.

If you are able to support the project financially, we are continuing to seek donations from individuals and groups. Donations can be made by bank transfer:

Account name: Liskeard Parochial Church Council, or Liskeard PCC (if the full name is too long)

Sort code: 40-28-22

Account number: 80531936

Reference: [Your initials & surname] Halls [Add "GA" if you are able to gift aid the donation] – e.g. AN Other Halls GA

If you are a taxpayer and can gift aid your donation you can download a gift aid form below to complete and email to mike.sturgess@hotmail.co.uk or post it / drop it into the church office in an envelope marked FAO Treasurer, St Martin's Church Centre, Church Street, Liskeard, PL14 3AQ.

Download Gift Aid form as Word document [here](#).

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