

Church & Tower Restoration
Project Update February 2025



St Laurence Church
'Balancing heritage with
function'



Since our last update, the PCC Fabric Subcommittee have spent many hours researching and discussing the finer points of the project and how to manage costs to be within our budget. We have also been seeking to recruit essential manpower, including an Information and Digital Assets Lead and an Evaluation Monitor.

Activities Planning is in hand. We will be adopting the use of Information boards and QR codes to encourage the engagement of the community of Blackmore. This will involve local groups, including the village school, through educational resources and the local Scout Association, who plan to create a nature trail around the Church.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) are closely involved with every step of the project and monitor certain 'approved purposes', which are requirements that the NLHF set out when providing funding. This includes monitoring our action log, financial status and communications plan, which are discussed with their investment managers at on site meetings. They also provide advice to the PCC Fabric Subcommittee when requested.

It is our responsibility to provide assessments of how the work is progressing and evaluate the delivery of the project against its goals.

Updates since October 2024

- The NLHF have expressed their confidence in our plans and satisfaction with the progress we have made to date.
- Tender drawings and specifications were finalised and submitted to potential contractors to return their quotes by January 10 2025. Several of the contractors visited the church and inspected the tower internally and externally using drones and visual inspections.
- The specification and costs are currently being fine tuned to get the project on budget and we are very close to appointing our building contractors! *So watch this space!*
- The Subcommittee have agreed to appoint Sean Wood, who lives in the village and is a member of St Laurence's Church, to the role of Information and Digital Asset Lead. Sean has had previous experience of working with young people and delivering technology related projects.
- The Subcommittee have agreed to appoint Evaluation Consultants.
- We are still awaiting a Bat Licence from Natural England. Once acquired, work can commence and it is very much hoped that this will be from around April, when the bat hibernation period has ended.
- Practical matters regarding scaffolding for the Tower renovation works need to be finalised. Members of the team are working hard to achieve this.
- Applications to the DAC for the necessary approvals for the related works (relating to the location of the font, siting of the shed, glass doors for the tower and lighting for the pathway and lychgate) are in progress. Several applications have already been submitted, while other items are awaiting quotes prior to submission.
- Storage solutions have been explored and researched. The items needed have been sourced and will be ordered imminently.
- A Timing Plan has been created. Due to negotiations on the building repair costs we are running a couple of weeks behind schedule. However the ambition is still for work on the tower to start in April 2025 with the project being completed towards the end of October 2025. *By Christmas 2025 our works should be complete!*
- The first Tower Restoration Project newsletter was sent out in October 2024.

Please pray for:



*The Tower Project Team as they lead the project *The extra funding needed to complete the whole project *Government decisions around reclaiming VAT for places of worship *Communications with stakeholders particularly neighbours *Appointing a contractor *Meetings with bat surveyors *The timing of the project.