

News about St Mary's proposed building projects

In the summer of 2025, we were notified that St Mary's building fund had been left a legacy in the late Peter Ruffle's will. Peter, who was a long-standing member of the church, was a skilled carpenter, and evidence of his woodworking talents may still be seen today in the church. We were so grateful for this unexpected act of generosity which, after lengthy legal processes, has finally allowed us to contemplate a range of building projects that previously we could only dream of tackling.

Plans and Projects

When the money finally reached our heavily depleted Building Fund, the PCC discussed how we felt the money should be used. We decided that we would aim to use half the money and reserve half for future needs, to be decided at the discretion of the newly established Building Committee, which consulted a specialist architect to help identify and prioritise possible projects.

Necessary work

Our quinquennial review had already recommended that repair work on the **two stone crosses** on the roof of the church should be undertaken to prevent falling, which would cause major damage. Some stonework also needs repair which could be done while the scaffolding is in place. Our architect is currently considering tenders and once this process is complete, we can apply for all the necessary permissions to enable work to commence.

Projects

We have considered a number of suggested projects and have estimated their costs :

1. **Church flooring** – loose and unsafe tiles and broken gratings; the main nave aisle has unsightly covering where grating was replaced and rotting wooden floor in the choir. As these could be considered as health and safety matters, our architect has flagged their repair as a **priority project**.
2. Installing **solar panels** on the south facing roof of the church.
3. Sorting out the cramped and cluttered multiple use **area around the font** at the church entrance.
4. Improving the **warmth of the church** with draught proofing (curtains) and additional heating.
5. Improving **disabled access** with an external second rail.
6. Sorting out the **decoration of the church**, re-plastering areas affected by previous heating project, re-painting walls and professionally cleaning and conserving the **Victorian tiles**.
7. At our recent Annual Parochial Church Meeting, a further (uncosted) project was suggested which entailed replacing the **pews** with more comfortable and portable seating.

Next steps

The Building Committee has proposed that, in addition to the necessary Roof work, we prioritise Project 1 (Church flooring), pursue Project 2 (Solar panels) and Project 4 (Warmth – draught proofing), to be followed by Project 6 (Redecoration) after other internal projects are complete.

Project 3 (Font area) needs further definition; Project 4 (Disabled access) needs cost estimates; Project 7 (Pew replacement) needs definition, cost estimates and debate before being considered.

Sadly, all church projects take longer than anyone can ever imagine because of all the permissions that are required and the specialist nature of the work, but at least we have started the journey!