

Shackleford and Peper Harow Parochial Church Council

Report prepared by the Church Buildings Focus Group on behalf of the PCC

December 2017

This report has been prepared for publication in the Parish of St Mary's, Shackleford and St Nicholas, Peper Harow. A focus group has been established to assist the PCC in considering the future of both churches in light of a dwindling congregation, a financial deficit and substantial repair and maintenance costs, which the Parish is responsible for.

This report is intended to be used as a briefing note for those interested in contributing ideas and comments. It sets out various options available to the Parish for further investigation and research.

We have not set out to draw any conclusions at this stage.

We would welcome constructive comment in writing sent by email or post to the following addresses:

Email: ShackPepChurch@hotmail.com

Post: The Church Office, Down Hollow, Down Lane, Compton GU3 1DQ

Please note we are one community, not to be divided by loyalties for one church or another but with a collective responsibility as guardians for two cherished community assets.

Postscript

We are aware that the ‘Taylor Review’ (December 2017), commissioned in April 2016 by the Chancellor and Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, has just been published. We will be reviewing the report and hope to draw benefit from its conclusions.

The report examines the funding and sustainability of the 12,200 listed churches in England. A copy of the report can be found on the UK government website as follows:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/669667/Taylor_Review_Final.pdf

In response to its publication, John Inge, the bishop of Worcester and the C of E’s lead bishop on church and cathedral buildings has been quoted, as follows:

“Our 16,000 churches are the jewel in the crown of our built heritage. They exist, as they always have done, to serve their communities. This is seen through daily acts of worship, celebrations of the joys of life and commemorations of its sorrows. They are, though, not just places of worship for their communities: they are social hubs for people of all ages, spaces to offer hospitality and vital services to the vulnerable; churches increasingly are the glue in community life.”

The Future of the Church Buildings in Shackleford and Peper Harow

Background

- The parish of Shackleford and Peper Harow has two church buildings. The older one is St Nicholas Peper Harow (Grade II* listed building) dating from the fourteenth century which had a major refurbishment following a fire in 2007. The younger one is St Mary's Shackleford (Grade II listed building); a Victorian building designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott dating from 1865.
- Shackleford has a population of about 770¹ and Peper Harow of 185 so we have two churches serving a population of less than 1,000. In contrast the population of Compton, with their one church, is 1,154.
- The active worshipping congregation in the parish is around 35 people and by and large it is these people supporting both churches; there are just a few exceptions with some individuals seeing themselves as belonging to just one or other of the two churches.
- At the moment we attempt to have a roughly equal number of services in each building per month. The average congregation is c.20. Remembrance Day, Christmas Day and Easter services attract bigger congregations. St Mary's has a capacity of 150-200 people and St Nicholas 50-120 people.
- To put things in perspective Church of England attendance on a Sunday is nationally now about 2% of the population and falling, so by that mark our attendance should be around 20 people on a Sunday. Overall Church of England attendance is half of what it was in the 1960s and it has been declining steadily, falling 12% in the last 10 years.² Shackleford and Peper Harow are no different from the rest of the country in having buildings too big for their current need.
- The Church of England has embarked on a radical 'reform and renewal' programme intended to reverse declining numbers, partly by diverting funds away from small, struggling rural parishes like ours and towards urban churches where the potential for growth is greatest. Sadly Churches and parishes like ours are not a priority for the Church of England.
- Weddings, funerals, baptisms and St Mary's School Assemblies and services, are also common uses of the buildings.

¹ Civil Parish Populations from 2011 Census

² Church of England Statistics - Annual Survey of Attendance 2015

- Unsurprisingly our parish is running a deficit budget (currently over £1,000 per month) with reserves almost exhausted and the small number of financial supporters of the parish's work having reached their limits in giving or would prioritise other village projects instead. It should be noted that, in spite of being called 'The Church of England', there is no financial support for churches from the government, local council or any other public body. Funds must be found at local level from individuals and the community.
- Within the Church of England every Church building must be inspected by an architect or chartered building surveyor approved by the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) every 5 years, The Quinquennial Inspection. Our most recent report in 2016 highlighted a significant amount of maintenance required on St Mary's. Rough guestimates of total cost of these works are in the order of £300,000 though not all of it is urgent.
- Whilst needing attention, most of these works do not currently pose any danger; they won't, however, get better all by themselves. We have been advised that the Priest in Charge and Parochial Church Council (PCC) are responsible for the building and for any accident or injury incurred through neglect of the fabric. The PCC had an open meeting in March 2017 attended by some 50 villagers to look at the state of the St Mary's building.
- Successive Rectors and PCCs have debated the sustainability of retaining two churches in such a small parish and the problem is becoming more acute every year. Sadly this debate has also served to divide the village with some showing strong loyalty to one or other church. These worries and constraints affect our ability to be a congregation that looks outwards instead of inwards. Some members of the PCC have expressed frustration at not being able to get involved with or to initiate projects that help people in need at home and abroad, because all of our time, energy and money tends to be focussed on keeping the buildings going.

Further information on both churches and the services available each month can be found on the benefice website at: <http://www.comshackpep.co.uk/about-our-benefice/4578588844>

Church Buildings Focus Group and its Purpose

In view of the current situation, the diminishing congregation and the expense of running the two Church buildings a small focus group has been formed which reports to the PCC.

At present membership of the Action Group comprises:

- Caroline Burnett Priest in Charge
- Will Stanley-Evans, PCC member and Shackleford resident
- Lizzie Geffen – Shackleford resident and former PCC member
- Richard Smith – Hurtmore resident
- Michael More-Molyneux – Compton resident and [Compton PCC]

The purpose of this group is to look at all the options for both churches and to make recommendations to the PCC to establish whether there is a sustainable use for the two churches and suitable funding for the future or if a more dramatic course of action is required.

We believe there are broadly four options to explore:

1. Retain the two churches, attempt to grow the regular congregation and start fundraising for the St Mary's repairs.
2. Make both churches available to other organisations or religious denominations, which will be able to contribute to the maintenance costs.
3. Look at more permanent alternative uses to lease part of St Mary's whilst retaining a church function in some part of the building.
4. Ask the Church of England to close one of the churches.

The working group has started to research each of these options. In order to progress any of them with the Church we need to demonstrate that we have considered them all in full. We have set out below our progress to date. For further details please also refer to the pros and cons for each church at the end of this document.

Option 1: Retain both churches, attempt to grow the regular congregation and start fundraising for the St Mary's repairs

If we were to keep both churches open we would need a significantly greater contribution to their upkeep from local residents, whether or not they were regular churchgoers. Most external fundraising/grants depend on matched local fundraising. The Action Group is looking at the potential for a 'Friends' scheme building upon the existing planned giving. However there are already a number of similar initiatives to support the village shop and potentially the pub.

A member of the Action Group recently attended a seminar on charitable fundraising for church buildings. It seems that applying for grants for such a big project would be a long arduous job, with those who have undertaken such projects at other churches taking up to a decade to reach their (smaller) targets. Grants are likely to be small (one or two thousand) and need to be matched by local fundraising. They are also dependent on proof that the building is well used and is an asset to the local community.

We have got a wealth of information on possible sources of funding but if we wanted to head down this route we would need to find someone willing to work on it as making all the required applications would be a considerable task.

From the seminar it was clear that fundraising would only be successful if there was a clear benefit to the community from any donation. There is a limit to how much we could raise for maintenance alone.

It was agreed that in order to enhance the position of St Mary's for grant funding there needs to be more use of it by the wider community and a concerted effort to raise the profile of both churches to encourage greater attendance at services.

In order to facilitate this Option 1, the action group has also identified some physical issues, which in itself will require additional funding, but which will need to be addressed immediately to make St Mary's more attractive :

- WCs on site (need both male and female for child protection)
- Kitchen facilities
- General improvement in ambiance - lighting, heating and bats

Furthermore, the current issue of the resident bats and their excrement needs to be addressed. In this regard the Action Group have done some initial research into the possibility of re-housing the bats and we are now in a position to advise the PCC accordingly.

Option 2: Make both churches available for use by other organisations or religious denominations, which will be able to contribute to the maintenance costs.

A number of initiatives have already been instigated, whilst others are still being researched, all of which are listed as follows:

- St Nicholas is already available to hire for quiet days and meetings. This hasn't been marketed for other social uses to date, however, it may be a suitable venue for certain events.
- St Mary's school has been approached to find out whether and under what circumstances they might use St Mary's more for events or teaching.
- There are various concerts and events that are already hosted in the churches, in particular school orchestral and choir performances.
- We have looked at the possibility of St Mary's being used as a film location and we will recommend to the PCC that it is registered now to hopefully generate some immediate income. This may not be an option for St Nicholas from a parking perspective although an option in collaboration with Mr Robert Fuller and the Peper Harow Estate.
- We have approached other denominations to see if they would like to share our Church and we are progressing a number of discussions in this regard.
- We have met with Stagecoach Godalming, the part time performing arts school, to see if they would be interested in running their courses and performances in St Mary's. They are very interested given the improvements set out above.
- Other denominations and organisations have been approached with further feedback anticipated, these include the Roman Catholic church, NADFAS and local art groups.

Once again, many, if not all these uses will require the additional kitchen and WC facilities and the initial investment, set out above.

In addition and similar to St Nicholas and to improve the versatility of the space within St Mary's, to widen its appeal to a variety of uses, we are to propose to the PCC that further research is undertaken into replacing the pews with chairs with the potential recommendation that an application be made to the DAC to carry out this initiative.

Option 3: Look at more permanent alternative uses to lease part of St Mary's whilst retaining a Church function in some part of the building.

The third option really flows from the second. If we do decide we would like to retain two churches then there are also a range of legal options for complementary use of church buildings which retain a function as a place of worship but which leases other parts to a greater or lesser extent. However, again we could only do this with the agreement and support of the Church of England through the local diocese.

Shackleford and Peper Harow, though small in population terms, are well served with a village hall, shop, pub, two schools, a children's nursery school, cricket club and pavilion and business units. It is not obvious that there is an unmet need in the community which the church building could be used to meet.

Owing to the larger size of St Mary's, it could lend itself well to being split into parts for alternative uses, either permanent or temporary, and be made available to third parties for rent. We have been advised that up to 50% of the church could be used for alternative non-religious purposes. For instance the north and south aisles and parts of the nave could be converted perhaps for office use or space for hosting 'events', whilst all areas forward of the nave would be retained for worship.

We are open to the possibility of a charity that requires work/studio space using the building in the way that Skillway use the chapel at the cemetery in Godalming.

Option 4: Ask the Church of England to close one of the Churches.

The final option would be to close one of the churches.

Closing a church building is a major proposition and is not encouraged by the central Church. There is a Closed Churches Team or Statutory Advisory Committee (SAC) of the Church of England, a group that advises the Diocese and the Church Commissioners on seeking new uses for churches. We had been given the contact of Peter Wagon (Pastoral Team Manager at the Church of England). Peter advised we speak to our local Diocese Advisory Committee (DAC) and in particular, Wendy Harris (Pastoral Secretary) based in Guildford. Contact has already been made with Wendy, who has advised a meeting with the new Archdeacon.

We tried unsuccessfully to engage the last Archdeacon with our plight but he has now retired so it is our intention to start again with the new Archdeacon and a meeting is being arranged for the New Year.

The decision to close one of the churches does not rest with the PCC. Furthermore, evidence is required to support an argument beyond just our financial position. In our case, with two churches in one parish, the decision as to which building, if any, is considered redundant, as well as the future use of the building, will rest with the Diocese or specialist committees following the consideration of a 'Church Building Reports (Pastoral Measure reports) and Survey Reports' prepared by the Church Buildings Council and a public consultation.

Matters for consideration by the Archdeacon and the Church Buildings Council are clearly the cost of outstanding repairs to St Mary's (and future maintenance costs) in light of a dwindling congregation but also the lack of a perpetual legal right to park at St Nicholas, as follows:

Access to St Nicholas, Peper Harow

One of the major issues that has been raised is whether the Church of England would consider having St Nicholas as its only parish church given its position within a private estate and without a legal right to park in close proximity.

All of the land that surrounds Peper Harow church is in private ownership. Walking through Peper Harow to the church is permitted and there is a legal right to drive to the church from the north. However, there is no legal right to park at the church.

Currently, Mr Robert Fuller, the landowner, generously allows us to use his land for car parking for services at Peper Harow church. In addition, Mr Fuller has given us his verbal assurance that the ability of worshippers to continue to park at the church will continue so long as he and his family own the land; an assurance for which we are very grateful.

We have to accept, however, that should ownership of the land ever leave the Fuller family this situation could change and the ability to park could either be refused or payment requested. This would severely limit access to the church and subsequently could seriously affect the Diocese's view on which of the two churches should be retained.

Next Steps

This briefing paper has been prepared to keep the parish informed about our work and has been circulated by the PCC as part of its desire to be open and transparent about the issues we are facing and the work we are doing. We will make it available on the Compton, Shackford and Peper Harow Benefice website <http://www.comshackpep.co.uk> and it will be circulated via the Shackleford news and Parish magazine.

We will keep you informed of our progress regularly via the Parish Magazine and Benefice website. We are conscious our progress may seem frustratingly slow for some but please bear in mind that the church locally is run by Caroline and a team of volunteers and the Church of England has a significant hierarchy and bureaucracy that needs to be navigated to make progress.

The current work of the Action Group is:

1. Arrange a meeting with the new Archdeacon early in the new year.
2. Continue to explore potential partners and 'tenants' for St Mary's with the prospect of alternative uses in whole in addition to its continued use as a place of worship.

Our next meeting will be early in the New Year.

If you would like to be involved and have time to contribute to our work please don't hesitate to contact us:

We would appreciate any feedback and thoughts from the Parish. Please can you provide initial feedback by 31 January 2018 to the e-mail or postal address below.

Email: ShackPepChurch@hotmail.com

Post: The Church Office, Down Hollow, Down Lane, Compton GU3 1DQ

Appendix 1 overleaf – Summary of the merits and issues of the two churches

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Pros and Cons for the Church Buildings in Shackleford and Peper Harow

Pros and Cons for St Mary's	
Pros	Cons
Designed by Sir Gilbert Scott	
Warm once the heating gets going though there are still draughty areas	Expensive to heat such a large building for small congregations (around 12-20 people). Heating can be noisy at times if not put on early enough.
Has a specific area where children can play before, during and after services. Has been used for 'Messy Church'	Has no toilet
St Mary's school assemblies are held there fortnightly as well as their Christmas and Easter services.	Has no kitchen
Works as a concert venue	Is poorly lit and lamps are very difficult to replace because of their height. Very little natural light.
Adequate street parking available	Has bats (and mice)
Has some attractive internal features (eg. stonework and reredos)	Requires extensive maintenance work
Has an open and often visited churchyard	Vestry is not secure when church is open
Can accommodate more worshippers than either of the other churches in the benefice.	Loop system for hearing impaired doesn't work and is currently in need of repairs costing around £700
Has a pipe organ (though one organist has reported it as 'hard work to play')	Fixed pews – makes the space inflexible for other use
Visited by Acorns nursery	
Capacity of up to 200 people for large events	
Location – on main road in Norney part of Shackleford village	

Pros and Cons for St Nicholas	
Well lit, with good natural light.	Heating currently not working
Easy acoustic for voice and music	No suitable area for children to play – the building's acoustic makes them sound very noisy.
Has one toilet	On private land
Has small kitchenette	Can't be left open for occasional visitors for security reasons
Chairs give flexibility	Seating limit 120
Has an open and often visited churchyard	Vestry is not secure if church is open
Electronic organ works well	Boundary wall needs repair
Good parking at weekends so long as agreement with Fuller family remains	Some decorations were installed without faculty.
Attractive features inside and pleasant setting	Midweek parking restricted
Good disabled access	
Loop system available for hearing impaired	Location – within a private estate not part of Shackleford village
Relatively recently rebuilt (2007) so limited back log maintenance	