



St Michael and All Angels, Ledbury

Minutes of Parochial Church Council – 19 March 2025

Present: Keith Hilton-Turvey (Rector) (Chair)
David Houghton (Churchwarden)
Cath Beech (Churchwarden)
Andrew Beech
Sue Cooper
Ian James
Anne Scull
Peter Scull
Sue Simpson
Will Wake

Apologies: Stephen Cheetham, Maria Dineen, William Hopkinson, Richard Nightingale

1376. Keith Hilton-Turvey opened with Psalm 112 and prayer.

Minutes of meeting held on 17 February

1377. These were agreed unanimously.

Minutes of the Standing Committee on 3 March

1378. These minutes were noted.

Safeguarding

1379. Nothing to report.

Volunteering

1380. The group to look at how more might be encouraged to participate more fully in the life of the church is in the process of being set up. A number of suggestions were made about how encouraging new people into the church, and people who used to attend back to the church. This might create a larger pool of potential volunteers. It was also suggested that the entire congregation should be encouraged to engage with this process.

Action: Churchwardens

Policies and procedures

1381. There had been no progress on the church risk assessment. David Houghton reminded the PCC that all accidents, however minor they seemed, must be recorded in the church accident book.

Net Zero

1382. Will Wake reported that there had been no response as yet to the application for Net Zero Demonstrator Church status. This would bring the possibility of grants towards a new heating system. He will report more fully at the June meeting on measures that the church might take to achieve bronze status in its EcoChurch rating.

Action: Will Wake

Finance

1383. A finance report from the treasurer was noted. It was noted that the late Stuart Heaton had left a sizeable legacy to the church. However, a condition of the bequest was that the church may not use the capital of this legacy – only the interest arising may be used for church purposes. It was important, therefore, that the sum be invested carefully. It was agreed that an investment policy should be drawn up, in consultation with the diocese. Additionally, the incoming PCC will be asked whether to raise the Parish Share to cover the cost of at least one stipend.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey/Stephen Cheetham/Churchwardens

Trinity altar

1384. The Trinity altar is now in use in the hall of St Helen's church, Hangleton, where that church is now worshipping. Because Chichester diocese has determined that this hall is not subject to their faculty jurisdiction, the Hereford diocesan chancellor has proposed that the gift of the altar be converted to a permanent loan arrangement. Under this, should St Helen's, Hangleton no longer need the altar at some point in the future, it would be returned to Ledbury. Andrew Beech has written to the diocesan registrar expressing doubts about the enforceability of this arrangement. A response is awaited.

Fabric

Heating

1385. Andrew Beech presented the paper at Annex A. In discussion there was some support for air source heat pumps, but it was acknowledged that, in a church with the volume of St Michael's, coupled with the complete lack of insulation, these would not be practicable. There was also some support for swapping Phases 2 and 3 of the proposals. Were the proposals in the paper to be agreed, the Fabric Sub-Committee would tender for the electric boiler and associated works that make up Phase 1. The PCC would be consulted before a faculty was applied for, once the results of the tendering process were known.

1386. Andrew Beech, seconded by Sue Simpson, proposed acceptance of the proposals in the paper (Annex A). This was agreed unanimously. The Fabric Sub-Committee were thanked for their work on this issue.

Action: Fabric Sub-Committee

Other Quinquennial Report fabric items

1387. The contractors for the roof valley work had been in touch, and it was hoped that the work would be carried out soon. In the absence of any effective communication with the church's inspecting architects, discussions were being held with a practice who might take on this role instead.

1388. The joiner who is to fit casters to four of the pews has collected two of them for the work to be carried out. It is not known how long they will be away for.

1389. An architect had been appointed to supervise the repair of the upper room floor at a fee of approximately £2,400. Advice from the diocese was awaited as to whether this work should be subject to a faculty or List B approval. Ian James proposed, seconded by Andrew Beech, that, should a faculty be required, one should be applied for. This was agreed with one abstention.

Action: Fabric Sub-Committee

1390. It had been hoped that the Heaton bequest might enable the spire to be repointed; this being a recommendation of the Quinquennial Report. But the conditions attached to the bequest preclude immediate action.

Follow-up to the meeting held on 4 September 2024

1391. Cath Beech asked the PCC to agree that the APCM be informed that, following the resolution passed at that meeting, the PCC had given detailed consideration to finding a way forward, but had been unable to identify one. It was asked whether it was lawful for the church to discriminate against women in this way. In response Keith Hilton-Turvey said that the church complied with Canon Law.

Action: Cath Beech

Community Garden

1392. Deferred to the next meeting.

Other Business

1393. On the 80th anniversary of VE Day, 8 May, there will be a commemoration at 9 a.m. at the war memorial. It has been proposed that a propane burner be lit on the tower parapet that morning. This is subject to the agreement of the town council and the fire authorities. Sue Simpson proposed a wider celebration within the church grounds. This will only be possible should volunteers to help be available.

Action: Keith Hilton-Turvey

1394. Ian James asked whether it might be possible to meet the needs of those who desire a period of prayer and contemplation immediately prior to a service by leaving such an interval prior to the service commencing and during the administration of Communion. This might require a compromise over timing where the Director of Music is attempting to teach the congregation a new song/hymn. Keith Hilton-Turvey agreed to speak to Kate Cheetham about this.

Date of Next Meeting: 7.15pm on Monday, 2 June 2025 in the Chapter House. The APCM will take place at 7.00pm on Thursday 10 April in the church, after which there will be a short PCC meeting..

The meeting ended at 21.20 with prayer.

Church heating

1. The Fabric Sub-Committee have received a report on costed options for a replacement heating regime for St Michael's. Their discussions have led to a majority decision in favour of recommending (with varying degrees of reluctance) the purchase and installation of a modular electric boiler to replace the existing gas installation. One of our number feels strongly that the Church of England Net Zero policy is both flawed and unrealistic, specifically in the matter of church heating, and that we should continue to cost and plan for the installation of a gas boiler in parallel with work on an electric boiler.
2. **The PCC is invited to agree in principle that the church should proceed on a three-phase project, as follows:**

Phase 1

This would involve:

- a) the removal of the existing gas boiler and associated items;
- b) its replacement with a modular electric boiler rated at 300kW with associated pumps, connecting pipework and controls (this will probably involve a number of smaller boilers inter-connected to provide 300kW in all);
- c) (if necessary) increasing the power supply to the church beyond the existing 100A per phase, three-phase supply and routing supply cables to the boiler house;
- d) such of the existing circulation pipework that needs repair or replacement will be dealt with appropriately (the extent of this work is, as yet, unknown);
- e) flushing out the existing pipework (as it has been disused for two winters), and the installation of a magnetic collector within the system;
- f) increasing the aperture in the floor of the disabled toilet as required to enable the new boiler to be passed through it;
- g) removal of the temporary radiant heating units from the nave, and their permanent, wall-mounted, installation in St Anne's Chapel and the Chapter House (four heaters in each).

Note that this phase would require the continued use of the existing radiators within the church. Consideration as to whether to replace them, in whole or in part, forms part of the next phase.

Should the proposed electric boiler installation prove to be unattainable (for whatever reason) replacement of the existing failed boiler with a new gas one (but with a shorter design life) would be requested instead. Installation of a boiler with a short design life (as has been permitted in the case of St Martin's, Hereford, see below) would provide heat whilst the future of power supply more generally becomes better understood.

Phase 2

Having installed heat in the building, the purpose of this phase is to find the most effective means of distributing that heat. We need to achieve both low level ambient heating whilst

the building is not in use (to protect the integrity of the church fabric and contents) and also the ability to boost the available heat in advance of services, events etc.

The existing radiators may be moderately effective, but are not ideally located for heating people using the nave. They do, however, counter the draught from the windows, and may heat the normally cold external walls (which may hold such heat). Modern radiators are far more efficient, contain less water and can provide a boost via fan assisted convection for services.

It is also possible that a system of finned tubular convector radiators located within the existing pipe ducts in the nave and chancel could be recommended, but further work is needed on this. Other forms of supplementary heating that could be considered include a heat curtain located above the north door (this would be similar to the one, say, in Clarks shoe shop in the High Street), and /or radiant halo heaters above the east and west ends of the north aisle. Finally, a wall mounted panel heater could be provided in the vestry. As part of the future work on the upper rooms, wall-mounted electric radiators are envisaged. The services of a mechanical and electrical consultant may be sought in this phase of the work.

Phase 3

This would see the replacement of the existing PV cells on the church roof (which are near the end of their design life) and their replacement with a new and, potentially much larger, array of PV cells. If the entire roof space that catches sunlight were to be used it might be possible to expand the array from the 54 cells currently in place, to around 200. New cells would be much lighter and more efficient than the existing ones. This option has yet to be costed.

However, this proposal will certainly be controversial, as the trade-off between the need to generate clean electricity and that of the need to protect ancient, listed, buildings has yet to be established. Applying for a faculty for PV cells on the roof of a Grade I listed building that alter the physical appearance of the building (i.e. can be seen from the ground) may well be opposed by some of the statutory consultees. In considering a faculty application, and the planning application that will be required, their interests will have to be balanced against the need to generate more clean electricity in this era of climate emergency (as declared by Herefordshire Council).

3. The Fabric Sub-Committee propose that, when ready, separate faculty applications be submitted for each of the three phases. In the case of Phase 1, this is likely to be uncontroversial, and could enable the boiler to be in place and operational quite quickly.

Other options considered

Gas

4. The consultant's report makes it very clear that the installation of a new gas boiler to replace the existing one would be the most cost-effective option. Not only are gas boilers cheaper to buy and install than electric ones, their running costs are lower too. However, the General Synod has committed the Church of England to achieve

Net Zero by 2030, and it has been made clear to us by the diocese that a request for a faculty to install a new gas boiler is more likely to be rejected than not¹.

5. At least two churches within the diocese have recently been granted a faculty for a new gas boiler. But one of them is converting from oil-fired heating, so the gas option is considerably greener than what is currently in place. The other has had to commit to installing a gas boiler with a design life of only ten years. To a majority of members of the Fabric Sub-Committee this would seem a false economy.

Heat pumps

6. As the PCC know the installation of a ground-source heat pump was rejected early in the search for a replacement heating system. It would involve the digging up of much of the churchyard, and require an archaeological survey of the area dug. This would be too disruptive and too expensive.
7. The consultant's report is quite positive about air-source heat pumps. Whilst their installation costs are higher than those of an electric boiler, their running costs may be considerably lower. The Fabric Sub-Committee believe the consultants have underestimated the extent of the heat loss from the building due to lack of insulation, and also the paucity of the heat potentially provided by heat pumps compared with that generated by a boiler (gas or electric). The Fabric Sub-Committee therefore cannot recommend air-source heat pumps for the following reasons:
 - a) They run at a lower water temperature and thus are only useful for keeping a well-insulated building warm. This is not the case at St Michael's, which has immense air volumes, no insulation and no realistic prospect of being granted a faculty to install any. The Fabric Sub-Committee therefore believe that, however many heat pumps were to be installed this would not provide sufficient heat for the building;
 - b) Air-source heat pumps are large and would be visually intrusive. Several would need to be installed, somewhere around the church building or the tower. There may be objections on planning grounds, and they could be subject to damage through vandalism. Planning permission would be required, and any excavation for the necessary pipework would require an archaeological survey;
 - c) The previous objection, namely that air-source heat pumps are noisy, no longer applies. One member of the Sub-Committee visited the installation at St. Leonard, Yarpole and found the heat pumps to generate acceptable levels of noise.

Under-pew heating

8. With 15 rows of pews either side of the nave (once the new concert arrangements are in place), some 90 metres of pew in total would need to be heated even if the heating were restricted to the area between the two nave arcades. This would be expensive to install, but not to run if run only when the church is in use. Each pew, or block of pews, could be heated as required. So, if not in use, the heating for that pew could be switched off.
9. The greatest objection to this form of heating is that it would not provide the lower level ambient heat necessary to protect the structure and fittings of the building from gradual

¹ The cost of the CofE Net Zero policy and its impact on individual parishes has not yet been tested in court. A test case would be beyond St Michaels' means, and would most likely take well beyond winter 2025 to resolve. The Fabric Sub-Committee is minded that St Michael's needs heat this winter.

decay. Neither would under-pew heating heat the circulation area of the church during services. The extent of new wiring, and its installation to avoid excavation of floors could be disruptive and visually intrusive.

Underfloor heating

10. The floor of the nave is solid concrete into which have been set a considerable number of ledger stones dating back, for the most part, to the 18th century. It is highly unlikely that permission would be granted to dig up this floor to allow underfloor heating to be installed. If it were, the delicacy needed to protect and reinstate the ledger stones would most likely be prohibitively expensive.
11. One alternative could be to install a false floor above the existing one, with the heating pipes (or electrical heating elements) located between the actual floor and the false one. This would render the ledger stones invisible and change considerably the internal appearance of the church. It is a moot point as to whether the diocese and statutory consultees would find this acceptable. The technical issues involved, including ventilation of the underfloor space, damp and condensation membranes etc., taken with the issues above, would rule out this option.
12. Furthermore, if the floor level were increased to accommodate the installation of necessary insulation with the underfloor heating, it would also increase considerably the number of steps to be negotiated in walking around the church.

Radiant heating

13. The Fabric Sub-Committee recommend the use of radiant heating as part of a hybrid solution. They propose the permanent installation in St Anne's and the Chapter House, and possibly elsewhere (see Phase 2, above). But radiant heaters do not heat air. Hence, if radiant heating alone were to be installed, it would not provide the ambient heating necessary to protect the structure of the building from gradual decay. We would still need radiators installed in these areas to give low level heating, as at present.
14. Radiant heat could also be available in the form of chandeliers suspended from the nave roof, which could also provide much better lighting in the nave. When discussed with the diocese this option was criticized by the DAC Secretary for its visual impact on the nave. However, such an installation in Innsbruck Cathedral, Austria, has been inspected and it might be possible to make a counter case to the diocese should this option prove attractive.

Next steps

15. The consultant's report has given the Fabric Sub-Committee outline costings of elements of the various options. But more detailed design work will need to be carried out with companies likely to tender for the work and energy suppliers. Once this is done, the PCC's approval will be sought to proceed with the expenditure before a faculty is sought. This will include details of how the installation is to be financed.
16. The PCC is reminded that the Listed Places of Worship grant scheme that allows a reclaim of VAT on works will be limited, from 1 April 2025, to a maximum claim of £25,000 per year. Thus, any project that costs in excess of £125,000 will exceed this limit, if all carried out in the same year.

Fabric Sub-Committee

March 2025

