

Good morning/evening.

I'm here today to provide an update on our Parish Building Project.

Phase 1 of the works was recently signed off by the architects and the Diocese Property Administrator.

Further information about Phase 1 is available on the Parish website for those interested. It covered the replacement of cast iron gutters, brickwork, and the stripping, re-slating of the eaves on the presbytery side and front of the church and immediate repairs to the drains at the front of church. Due to unforeseen delays at the quarry, the replacement of the stone cross is planned to follow later this year.

The total cost for phase 1 was £146,000. Despite the earlier closure of the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme on 18 February, we still managed to reclaim £11,000 of VAT.

We are extremely grateful for the generosity of the Parish community in donating £147,000, plus reclaimed gift aid of £11,000, in addition to the grants received of £65,000, to give a total of £234,000. After deducting the Phase 1 costs, this leaves a surplus of £88,000 as we prepare for Phase 2.

We have started working with the Diocese to arrange the tender for Phase 2, which will cover the car park side and rear of the church. We have been advised that the cost is likely to be higher than Phase 1 given the competitiveness of the Phase 1 tender process, inflation, and the changes made by the Government to the scheme that previously enabled the recovery of VAT.

We will be in a position to share more detail later this year following the tender process. Work is anticipated to start after Easter next year.

Part of planning for Phase 2 involves applying for further grant funding to support the current building fund balance. These applications will be strengthened by the progress of the Parish's fundraising to date, together with completing Phase 1 on a timely basis.

Further to the success of the Building Fund, the Parish recently received two major and unexpected windfalls in the last few weeks:

- £112,000 of income relating to historical rent paid by an independent nursery on the site of St Robert's Primary School that has been passed from the Diocese to the Parish; and
- a very generous donation made by the late Kath Plant in the region of £100,000.

This unexpected money will be used to refresh the inside of the church by improving the entrance and redecorating, and we are assessing repairs needed in the Parish Centre to address some serious damp issues in the basement. We will share more information about the costs for these elements when we are in a position to do so.

This is a multi-year project to maintain the fabric of our church and we will continue to provide updates as progress is made.

We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our thanks to all those who have donated so generously to the building fund to date. I will be outside the church after Mass if anyone has any immediate questions. Thank you.