



ROCK UPDATE FOR ALL SAINTS MEMBERS

MAY 2019

This is an update for Church members on progress and activity with the ROCK project in 2019. There are three things to report on:

1. Progress with our consultations with the B&NES Planning Officer over our plans and intention to submit a planning application
2. The outcome of the consultation on chairs
3. Plans to open the church during the day on a trial basis one day a week

1. TALKING TO B&NES PLANNERS

Following a meeting with B&NES officers in January, which was generally positive, we agreed to submit a third Pre-Planning Application Inquiry. This enables the B&NES planning officers to give you advice on your plans so that you can modify them (if you think that is the best thing to do) before submitting a formal planning application. This is so as to avoid being refused planning permission. We decided last year that we would try to get the officers to approve the scheme without the need to go to the Council Planning Committee.

Once again we put a great deal of effort into our writing and preparing this 'Pre-App'. On 2 April we received the response back from the Council's Senior Conservation Officer. Our planning consultant who has 30 years of working with the B&NES planners says it is one of longest responses he has seen! The general conclusion is along the lines of: *'It is unlikely that we will object to the proposed extension but you need to*

make a few more changes to your landscape proposals and you also need to supply more information'. This is both encouraging as well as frustrating (because we have already supplied an enormous amount of information) but we will do our best to comply with the requests for more information. In particular the officers have said we should:

- Conduct an exploratory archaeological investigation around the area where the extension will go, so as to find out the likely extent of human remains and other significant archaeological items
- Conduct further bat survey work
- Do further work to show the extent of the visual changes to the landscape of the introduction of the extension
- Secure the agreement from the owners of the strip of land on the other side of the far end of the car park to our proposed extension of car park; the owners are the owners of the sheltered housing between the High St and Lynfield Park i.e. The Guinness Partnership
- Strengthen the arguments for the community benefits of the scheme
- Produce a long-term landscape strategy for the churchyard (slightly difficult as it is managed by the Council!)
- Produce a detailed lighting plan which is makes sense ecologically

This is obviously not an afternoon's work! Where we can do the requested work ourselves, we will; but clearly some things will need to be commissioned from our consultants.

These consultations only relate to the extension and the landscape because the Council does not have a say over any internal changes to the church or indeed over any relocations of the memorials in the churchyard. These come within the jurisdiction of the Diocese. We have held back on detailed consultations with the Diocese but given what they have said to us before, we expect them to be somewhat easier to deal with than the local authority planners.

2. CHAIR CONSULTATION

Thank you to everyone who took the time and trouble to reply to the chair survey earlier this year. We received a total of 132 responses. The respondents covered nearly all ages, but older members replied in greater numbers than younger ones – perhaps comfort is of less concern to the young!

We chose only two criteria for this exercise – style and comfort. However, as noted by some, there are many other things to take into account before we make a final selection. We will need to look at cost (versus life

expectancy), our budget, ease and efficiency of stackability, weight and stability when joined together. In addition any choice we make will have to be agreed to by the Diocese. We are only at the start of making what will be a very important decision for all of us.

What have we learnt?

1. Everyone has a different view of what makes a chair stylish and comfortable! All the 14 chairs shown in church had some who liked them.
2. Some chairs will need arms to help those who are not as agile as they were.
3. Chairs with padding/upholstery are preferred to those without.
4. Lots of people enjoyed talking about this very important issue of the ROCK plans – it was something tangible.

What next?

1. We will continue to look for all chairs that we might consider – this survey did not cover every chair on the market for Churches.
2. We will look at, listen to feedback from, and possibly visit other Churches who have chairs.
3. We will be glad to hear from you as you travel around and visit other places.
4. Please do talk to/email any member of the ROCK team, send us photos, and rate how your 'sitting' experience was elsewhere.

3. OPENING THE CHURCH ON A TRIAL BASIS

It has always been part of the ROCK vision that the Church should be much more available and accessible. A very simple and obvious way of doing this is to have the church open, even when there is nothing actually happening in church, like a service or an event. Given the very high numbers of people who crisscross the churchyard everyday, we think the number of people who would like to come into the church would be quite high.

Of course you do not need a transformed church to open it on a regular basis. However, you do need to think about the security of having an

open building and – more importantly – of how you might intentionally help any who come in looking for some kind of spiritual help – even if they do not know it at first.

That is why we would like to put our toes in the water of opening up the church. As a start we propose to open it up every Tuesday (when it is already open for the Tuesday morning service). We will be looking for volunteers who would commit to being in church for a couple of hours or so on a Tuesday and who would make themselves available to any who came in. This might be providing simple information about the church but it might go deeper than that. If no one comes in, you can read, pray, write letters, work on your laptop (the church has Wi-Fi!) – or just be still. More about this later.