

A vision of the Future for Suckley Church

Suckley Church is at the very heart of our lovely village of Suckley where worship continues as it has done for centuries with the bells inviting folk to services, baptisms and weddings. The current church was built between 1878 and 1889, replacing an earlier smaller building on the same site as the need to cater for a larger congregation arose. (The earlier smaller church had the first Suckley School within its walls!) Changes of population, church-going and priorities of modern life have led to the current congregation dwindling to a level where the cost of the material upkeep of the church is unsustainable without a major review of funding for the future. The neighbouring church of Knightwick closed and was decommissioned in the 1990's when a similar situation arose. Similarly, Lulsley Chapel, Tedstone Wafre Church, Wolferlow Church and Linley Green Chapel are all WR6 places of worship that have become redundant in recent years. The PCC and the villagers of Suckley are keen to see our Church remain open and have a future in the 21st Century. If we want to maintain the church as a viable building and look to increase its usefulness for the whole community of Suckley, then we need to take action.

A vision for the future.

In addition to the need for routine maintenance of our church, there is clearly a need to provide modern facilities, such as toilets, running water and kitchen facilities, to enable the church to be properly functional for major events, such as major festivals, baptisms, weddings and funerals, when it can be full.

In addition to the needs of the church, the local village primary school situated next door to the school has a need to be able to expand its activities as it continues to be successful and plan for growth. Prior to the building of the current school building the school used to be housed within the previous church building in the south west corner, and our vision for the future is to see the school return to use the church building for activities such as large assemblies, gymnasium, additional classes, concerts etc.

Our plan

We plan to re-order Suckley church to respond to the needs of the village and the school, and at the same time provide an income stream from this use which will enable the church to survive and remain alive in the 21st century. The plan will be to open up the main body of the church as a multi-functional space with removable stackable seating, so that the space may be used for school and other activities. We also aim to provide toilets and professional quality kitchen facilities to support these expanded activities. In order to do this we plan to be extending the church on the western end both sides of the tower. Partitioning the Lady Chapel and the vestry could provide further meeting rooms for school and other village activities.

These plans have the enthusiastic support of the headmaster and governors of the school and the Diocesan Advisory Council (DAC). This DAC support is the church equivalent of obtaining ordinary planning consent. Clearly any extensions and alterations will be carried out with the advice of the DAC, the Diocesan architect, and will be sympathetic to the historical character of the current church building. We would wish to be able to maintain and improve all the present church activities.

Funding

Similar projects have successfully taken place in other similar sized communities such as St Martin's Church in Horsley near Stroud. We have taken the advice of a professional fundraiser and will be approaching various Trusts and other grant giving bodies, such as the National Lottery, to seek the majority of the necessary funding.

There will be an **open public meeting** in the church on **Wednesday June 8th** at 7.30pm to discuss these ideas and to hear what other ideas Suckley folk may have. Please come along, and encourage others to come too.