

Cossington Church and Community Centre
Project Group Update: Autumn 2014
Building for Cossington's Future



This update is a report of the excellent public meeting which took place in the Church on 6th October. It is an attempt to inform all those who could not attend of the information given out then. Very many thanks to the 50 villagers who braved the wind and rain to attend this important gathering. It is extremely heartening to know that a lot of us care deeply about the fate of our church and the proposed new community facility. Many thanks to all those who sent their apologies and good wishes.

Richard Hopkins welcomed everyone and outlined a brief history of the project. The last proposal had been rejected by the Chancellor. Faculties are granted by the Chancellor of the Diocese, who is the judge of the Consistory Court. Faculty permission provides the PCC not only with authority to undertake work to the church building but also with protection in the event of any subsequent objections to work that has been done. The proposed extension was two storeys and was therefore considered too big. Although the proposal was rejected it was a very valuable lesson on how to proceed this time and will have contributed to the success of this project.

The present proposal is smaller and yet still meets the needs of the church and wider communities. The Statement of Need identified what was necessary and all the relevant bodies, including English Heritage, have accepted that.

The next stage was to have our architect, David Pendery of Purcell, design an extension which was acceptable to all the consulting organisations. With infinite patience David has produced no less than 13 different possibilities. After considerable consultation with the Diocesan Advisory Council the favoured design, which has come to be known as Option 12, will be put forward. English Heritage have deemed that it is the least harmful, which, as Richard pointed out, is as close as their terminology will allow to an unqualified yes.

David Pendery then showed the plans and drawings of Option 12 explaining the reason for some of the features.



1 PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN
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David explained that the main community space will be the nave of the church, that the meeting room in the extension could be split into smaller spaces and that the kitchen would be big enough to provide hot food for 100 people if required.

The existing North Door will be opened up to link the extension to the church. It is proposed that the main entrance to the extension will be on the North side and will be accessed via the Parish Council Car Park. This means the dark church drive will not be the only way of approaching the church by car.

Looking at the Eastern Elevation (the view that will be seen from the road, as shown on the front cover of this newsletter) it has been made as “churchy” as possible, according to David. It is this view that has caused more discussion with the conservation bodies than any other aspect of the project. The materials used will be suitably sympathetic in order to blend in with the existing church.

An important part of the Project is the repair and refurbishment of the existing church. The floor will be made dry and level. Whilst the exact nature of the configuration for seating etc. is still to be decided, pews will be retained although they will be moveable. There will be additional seating provided by a stackable chair system similar to the one used in Leicester Cathedral. Used with circular tables these chairs will enable 100 people to sit down to a meal, meeting or conference. This will keep some of the tradition of the pews whilst allowing the flexibility of modern seating for community uses.

David outlined briefly the schedule of events that he envisaged. The proposed start date was July 2016 but this has since been moved to November 2016. The build and refurbishment should take 9 months.

Stephen Castleman then gave a brief summation of the financial position. Counting bank deposits and pledges already given the total available is over £400,000. The overall price for the whole project is £904,000. He introduced Julian Thomas of Craigmyle, the project’s fundraising advisers.

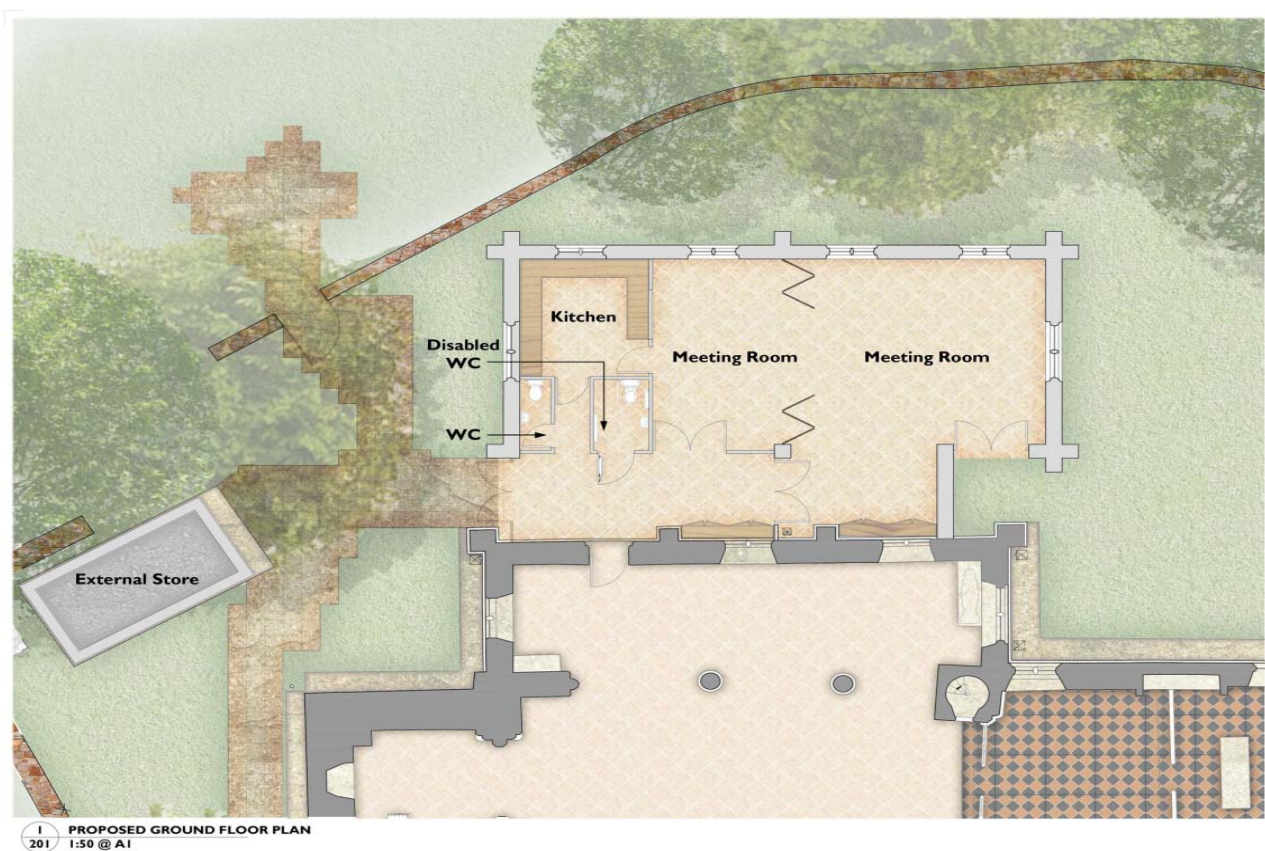
Julian outlined a few of the funding streams which this project would qualify for. The main is Heritage Lottery Fund and the initial application has now been submitted. He stressed that because of the conservation and community aspects of the project it would be relatively straightforward to obtain funding to match the amount raised. Community involvement in fundraising was extremely valued as it demonstrated the commitment of local people to the project.

Richard then ended the meeting by reiterating how positive the state of play was and invited questions. One of the questions raised was “who owns the building when it has been completed?” The answer to this is not straight forward but in simple terms the PCC act as managing trustees of the church site whilst the church is open for worship unless any special arrangement is made. Richard sought to reassure everyone that as there is an overwhelming commitment to keep Cossington church open as a place of worship and develop it for the benefit of the whole community, and, as the process of closure of a church requires statutory consultation with both the church community and the village community, it seems an extremely unlikely outcome after the building work is

completed because the church would play an even greater role in the life of the village than it does now.

Other questions were about the drainage implications of the project for adjacent land and the pond in particular. There was a query as to whether the existing drains would be able to cope. David Pendery assured the meeting that the professional team drawn up to oversee the project would have to take all these factors into consideration and come up with suitable solutions.

Many people remained behind for refreshments and to discuss the proposals. The general feeling was of positive support. Villagers were pleased to learn that the project is well advanced and shows every prospect of success.



There will be more information in the very near future. A village website is being constructed and details of the project will be regularly updated on that.

A very large thank you to all who have contributed, in whatever manner, to getting us to this point. Please continue to talk about the proposals and make sure you have your say in this pivotal venture.

Please, as ever, if you wish to get involved in the project or if you want to find out more about what is proposed then do not hesitate to contact me,

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