

Plymouth Catholic Cathedral: External Repairs (1 of 3 projects funded)

Awarded £398,496 in March 2015

The need

The cathedral is situated on high ground and exposed to severe coastal storms. It had been experiencing serious problems of water penetration through the walls and windows caused by poor weathering details and inadequately sized gutters which could not cope with heavy rainfall; in extreme weather rain overflowed the gutters and cascaded down the walls, interrupting services and events.

Outcomes

Repairs to the stonework surrounding the windows has ensured that the cathedral is now wind and water proof. Upgrading of the cathedral's rainwater system and guttering has prevented further water damage and means that leaking will no longer interrupt worship. Repairs to the cathedral's failing masonry and timber has also improved the appearance of the cathedral.



Plymouth Cathedral following the repairs. Photo credit: Purcell UK Architects.

Economic and social impact

The three funded projects at the cathedral supported a total of 13 full-time equivalent jobs, covering traditional building methods including stonemasonry and window repairs, as well as architecture, engineering, building surveying and design. Confidence in the cathedral is at an all-time high after the repairs, and visitor numbers have increased. Without the repairs the cathedral would probably have had to close because of the health and safety risks. The cathedral was able to provide more First World War commemorations and held a rededication mass once all the works were complete. It has installed a permanent display of World War One memorabilia and opened a Book of Remembrance, allowing families to commemorate the lives of loved ones lost in conflict.

Works completed and timescale

Corbel Conservation Ltd were commissioned to carry out both phases of the cathedral's repair work. The first phase was carried out during 2016 and was complete within a 12-month window. The project involved roof and stone works to prevent water ingress, including replacement of undersized rainwater goods, associated masonry repair, conservation or replacement of lead flashings, valley gutter repairs, conservation of the masonry and glazing of the west window, and repointing of the clerestory walls.



Window Repairs. Photo credit: Purcell UK Architects.

The Cathedral

Plymouth Cathedral is the mother church of the Catholic Diocese of Plymouth, created in 1850, which covers the counties of Cornwall, Devon and Dorset. The building was begun in 1856, designed by architects Charles and James Hansom. In 1858 the new cathedral was opened dedicated to the Virgin Mary and Saint Boniface, the latter being born in Crediton in the area of the diocese. The Cathedral is also used by Royal Navy personnel stationed at HMNB Devonport for the annual naval mass celebrated in July.

Plymouth Catholic Cathedral: Stonework and Window Repairs (2 of 3 projects funded)

Awarded £644,000 in July 2016

The need

The application was for the second phase of essential work as described on the previous project summary, to repair leaking windows and deterioration of the Bath stone.

Outcomes

The repair works have ensured that the cathedral can remain open; the health and safety risks prior to the projects meant that closure was a possibility. It is also warmer and safer. The repointing, in addition to the breathable materials and ventilation, has reduced the likelihood of any future damp problems.



Completed repairs to the south elevation. Photo credit: Purcell UK Architects.

Economic and social impact

Savings were made during this phase of repairs as some of the repairs were not as extensive as first anticipated. This was managed effectively and the fund's Expert Panel allowed £38,000 of the funds to be transferred into the cathedral's heating repairs project (see summary sheet 3), for which only a partial grant had been offered. The three funded projects at the cathedral supported a total of 13 full-time equivalent jobs, covering traditional building methods including stonemasonry and window repairs, as well as architecture, engineering, building surveying and design. Confidence in the cathedral is at an all-time high after the repairs, and visitor numbers have increased. Without the repairs the cathedral would probably have had to close because of the health and safety risks. The cathedral was able to provide more First World War commemorations and held a rededication mass once all the works were complete. It has installed a permanent display of World War One memorabilia and opened a Book of Remembrance, allowing families to commemorate the lives of loved ones lost in conflict.



Completed repairs to the west front windows. Photo credit: Purcell UK Architects.

Works completed and timescale

Corbel Conservation Ltd were again contracted to carry out the second phase of repairs. The works commenced in April 2017 and were complete in March 2018. The works included repairs to the leaking West Front triptych windows and the South and North Transept windows and restoration of the Bath stone which had become weathered. Existing condensation trays were repaired and better ventilation was provided through the bottom of each window. External repointing of the aisle and quire-level walls was also undertaken. The use of breathable materials will ensure that the walls are vapour-permeable, reducing condensation problems in future.

Cathedral quote

The repair needs of this cathedral have been and are extremely serious compared to our limited means. However, the generous support of the Fund has enabled us to carry out the necessary repairs that would otherwise have been impossible, and would have ultimately put the very existence of Plymouth Cathedral and the future preservation of its heritage at great risk (Mgr. Bartholomew Nannery, Dean, March 2018)

Plymouth Catholic Cathedral: Heating System (3 of 3 projects funded)

Awarded £100,000 in November 2016 and reallocated an additional £38,000 in August 2017

The need

The previous heating system, dating to the 1980s, was inadequate and near the end of its life-span. It consisted of a single warm air heater located within the tower, noisy in use and extremely inaccessible for maintenance. Large parts of the cathedral suffered from under-heating and the build-up of condensation, particularly those furthest away from the heating source. Given the amount that had already been invested into the cathedral exterior repairs, replacing the heating system was an essential next step in protecting the internal fabric.



Plymouth Cathedral following repairs. Photo credit: Purcell UK Architects.

Outcomes

The cathedral is now warmer and dryer as a result of replacing of the heating system. Without this essential work the cathedral would have been forced to close within 6-12 months due to the extent of damage being caused to the building.

Economic and social impact

A total of 13 full-time equivalent jobs were supported across the cathedral's three repair projects. This particular phase supported jobs in electrical engineering, mechanical engineering and building surveying. Confidence in the cathedral is at an all-time high after the repairs, with more individuals visiting and attending services. Without the repairs the cathedral would probably have had to close because of the health and safety risks. The cathedral was able to provide more First World War commemorations and held a rededication mass once all the works were complete. It has installed a permanent display of World War One memorabilia and opened a Book of Remembrance, allowing families to commemorate the lives of loved ones lost in conflict.

Works completed and timescale

Somerset Mechanical were awarded the contract for carrying out the heating system replacement works. Work commenced in August 2017 and were complete in November 2017. Underspend in the previous repair project meant that the cathedral was permitted by the fund's Expert Panel to transfer an additional £38,000 to assist in replacing the heating system.

Cathedral quote

We are extremely thankful to the First World War Centenary Cathedral Repairs Fund, which has enabled us to undertake the much-needed work to repair and renew the fabric and heating...the cathedral is once again dry, warm and accessible to all (Mgr. Bartholomew Nannery, Dean, March 2018)



The High Altar. Photo credit: Purcell UK Architects.

The Cathedral

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