

News Release

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KILDWICK CHURCH PROJECT FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE

The project to provide new community facilities at St Andrew's Church in Kildwick has been given a provisional green light by the Diocese of Bradford's Chancellor.

His Honour Judge John Walford, who had been asked to adjudicate on the plans aiming to provide facilities including disabled access, flexible worship and meeting spaces, efficient heating, sound and lighting systems and lavatory and kitchen facilities, said that he was prepared to grant a faculty for a "major reordering of St Andrew's". However the Chancellor decided he could not, at the moment, rule on specific elements of the plans due to the present "extraordinary economic climate." He wants to ensure that sufficient funding will be available for the reordering and would therefore give the church and its supporters until the end of 2010 to raise enough money to enable the project to proceed. He will then deliver his final ruling on the details of the Lang Kirk 21 project.

Judge Walford acknowledged that the plans had been the product of a lot of "time, thought and hard work" and had evolved over several years. He noted that there was "substantial local support" as well as the support of the Diocesan Advisory Committee, the Council for the Care of Churches, English Heritage, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Victorian Society and Craven District Council. He also acknowledged there had been "considerable objection" to the proposals.

Judge Walford described the Lang Kirk 21 plans as "imaginative and ambitious" and said: "I am satisfied that there is a need for some reordering of the church. Change and development and improvement have been features of the history of this building just as they have been for other such buildings of similar age".

Speaking on behalf of the church community the Vicar of St Andrew's, the Reverend Robin Figg, said: "We are very relieved that the long wait for the judgement is over and that the Chancellor has approved the principle of our Lang Kirk 21 project. We have always agreed that it is important to raise sufficient money before works can begin and we are thankful that we can now move towards a major fundraising appeal. In the present economic climate we are aware that raising substantial sums will not be easy, but we believe that it is our responsibility, as the present generation of Christians here at St Andrew's, to do all that we can to ensure the survival of our beautiful building. So many equally beautiful churches have fallen into disuse because they have been unable to adapt: it would be tragic to see St Andrew's follow the same path.

Judge Walford also commented that, in these uncertain times, "it could seem insensitive, if not offensive, for the church to be lavishing huge sums of money on a scheme of reordering on this scale." In response Mr Figg said: "Were the worshipping community to be suggesting these plans purely for selfish reasons such as wanting to be warm and comfortable in church and to have ready access to toilet and refreshment facilities for themselves, then I would share these concerns. However, we want St Andrew's to be at the heart of the life of the local community, not only for the committed Christians who worship here Sunday by Sunday, but for all the groups which the reordering could enable to use the building seven days a week. In putting forward these proposals we have sought to enhance the social and spiritual life of the whole community and we will do our utmost to raise the necessary money to achieve this."

The Parochial Church Council will continue to work closely with the church's architect, Mr Nick Rank of Buttress Fuller Alsop Williams of Manchester, and with community development consultants Jackson Quigg Associates Ltd of Hipperholme. Mr Rank has extensive experience of church work, including work at Carlisle and Lincoln Cathedrals. Jackson Quigg Associates Ltd has been involved in many community projects including the recently completed £4.5million Cornerstone Project at Cottingley, near Bingley, for which they raised over £2m.