

**THE FRIENDS OF
THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST ANDREW
DONHEAD ST ANDREW**

WHITHER THE FRIENDS?

A discussion paper and recommendation from the Friends Committee

The Friends was set up in 2003, first of all chaired by Peter Campbell and then by John Hill, to ‘help raise funds for the maintenance of the church fabric including the churchyard and to contribute to such improvements for facilities as may be required’.

The Development Project is now completed and has been fully funded through the Development Appeal run by the Committee of the Friends.

The comprehensive nature of the work to the church building from 2017 to 2019 means that the fabric of the church should only require modest maintenance for many years to come. A sum of not less than £10,000 has been retained by the PCC in the church’s Fabric Fund to cover such costs, augmented by the income from the sponsorship of the new chairs. The Chair Appeal will continue until such time as all 124 chairs are sponsored.

The project to restore and plant out the graveyard is well under way and is fully funded.

Back in October 2019 all was set for a busy and varied programme of community events and activities in the church as well as weekly worship. Within five months the Covid-19 virus struck.

The continuing Covid-19 pandemic has brought into stark relief the situation with regard to St Andrew’s Church’s annual running costs. Income has been cut dramatically (no Sunday collections, no Church Fete, no lettings) whereas the principal components of annual expenditure remains broadly the same (Diocesan clergy remuneration and pension contribution, Benefice expenses).

A Regular Giving Appeal in 2020 produced some additional income. The Appeal will be given a second run this year.

The Friends Committee is of the view that now the Development Project and Appeal has been successfully completed, the focus needs to be on maximising the use of the church for the widest possible community benefit.

In a small village with a population of around 400, we don’t think that there is a need for two groups - the Parochial Church Council and the Friends - to have a very similar focus.

Our recommendation is that the Friends ceases to exist and that villagers who wish to support the use of their village church as a centre of the community should focus any financial contribution on the Regular Giving Scheme.

The funds will be used to maintain the church and its resources in first-class condition so that, once the restrictions caused by the pandemic are over, the church can implement the planned programme of community talks, live music, coffee mornings and exhibitions as well as regular worship.

The Friends has put on many fundraising events over the lasting years. They were of course with a principal intent of fundraising, but they also showed how well community activities in the future would be received and the pleasure and conviviality to be found in volunteering.

As soon as the pandemic allows, the community events and activities programme for 2021 will be reinstated, run by one of the working groups of the PCC, supported by volunteers from the village community.

RECOMMENDATION: To close the Friends of St Andrew's Church with effect from the 24th April 2021, the date of the St Andrew's Church APCM and transfer the remaining funds in the Friends' bank account to the St Andrew's Church Fabric Fund.

Michael Hockney, Danuta Tagg, Edrys Barkham, David Hammersley and George Lisle - March 2021